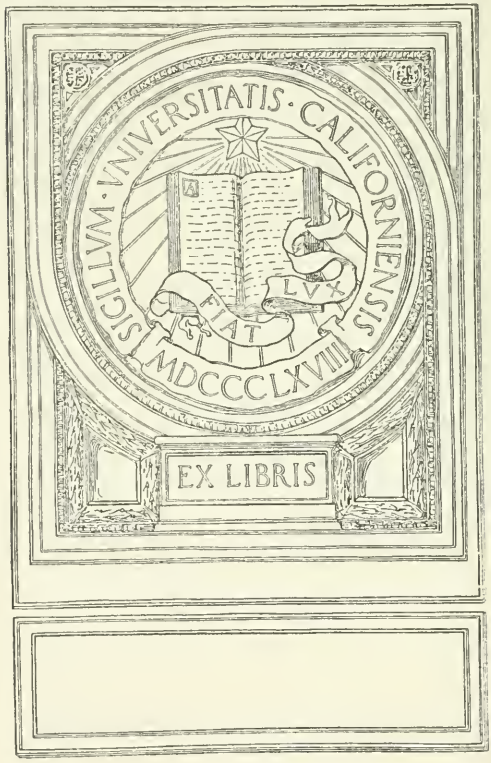
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE

HISTORY

OF

THE FACTORY MOVEMENT

FROM

THE YEAR 1802, TO THE ENACTMENT OF THE TEN HOURS' BILL IN 1847.

By ALFRED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE

HISTORY OF THE FACTORY MOVEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANT MEETING AT THE LONDON TAVERN, IN 1833.—SPEECHES OF DUNCOMBE, O'CONNELL, OASTLER, SADLER, AND LORD ASHLEY.

THE adoption by Lord Ashley of Mr Sadler's factory bill was, to his lordship, and to the factory operatives, a step of importance. The success of a movement must, to a great extent, depend upon the judgment of the leader, his constancy of purpose, and the confidence reposed in him by those he undertakes to represent. "Divide and conquer," is the favourite maxim of politicians, and they are ever in search of some weakness or contradiction, real or apparent, in the camp of their opponents. Those who had distinguished themselves against Mr Sadler in parliament, knew how thoroughly he possessed the confidence of the factory operatives; they fondly hoped that his successor would have less support in the country, and, consequently, less influence in the House of Commons. There were those also, who conceived it possible that Mr Sadler would not, under his changed circumstances, continue to feel the same intense interest in the factory question, which had hitherto animated

his whole soul ; that the want of position in parliament, as the leader of a great social question, would cool his ardour, and make him jealous of the honour conferred on his successor. The majority of politicians, distinguished as members of the legislature, are disposed to measure their duties by their appreciation of honours enjoyed; with Mr Sadler this was not the case ; he was moved to action by his sense of duty to God, and he accepted of honour or censure as they might occur, regardless of neither, but never allowing his own desires to form the rule of his practice, except in so far as these corresponded with the dictates of conscience. Mr Sadler's most intimate coadjutors fully appreciated his noble qualities of heart and head, these were not however understood by those who only knew him as an opponent in parliament, they hoped to gain strength by his exclusion.

The London Society for the Improvement of the Condition of Factory Children, acting under the patronage of his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, resolved to convene a meeting in the City of London Tavern, Bishopsgate street, of the friends of the society, on the 23rd of February, 1833. The meeting was most influentially attended; it served the threefold purpose, of bringing the condition of those employed in factory labour, under the consideration of the London public and press, to petition parliament for the restriction of the labour to ten hours per day, and to publicly inaugurate Lord Ashley, as the adopted parliamentary leader of the question. Sir Peter Laurie, Lord Mayor, occupied the chair. In the words of the morning newspapers, "The meeting was graced by a numerous and highly-respectable assemblage of ladies, who appeared to take a deep interest in the proceedings. Among the gentlemen who appeared on the platform, we observed: Lord Teynham, Lord Ashley, Hon. Wm. Duncombe, M.P., Colonel Torrens, M.P., Colonel Williams, M.P., Mr Robinson, M.P., Mr O'Connell, M.P., Mr Sadler, late M.P., Mr Wilks, M.P., Sir

William Blizard, Mr Lyall, Mr Alderman Venables, Mr R. Peek, Sheriff, Hon. Mr Frazer, Sir Edward Knatchbull, M.P., Sir Andrew Agnew, M.P., Mr Owen, of Lanark, Captain Brenton, R.N., Mr William Smith, late M.P., Mr Carruthers, Mr Helps, Mr Freeze, Mr Nathaniel Gould, Mr Labouchere, Rev. Dr Russell, Rev. Daniel Wilson, &c." Mr Oastler and the Rev. Mr Bull attended, by invitation, to address the meeting.

In the annals of factory agitation not any meeting, considered in all its bearings, moral, social, political, and in connection with time and circumstance, could have been more important. It was the first public meeting on the factory question since the passing of the Reform Bill, at which men of all shades of politics and religion had met for the accomplishment of one common end. It was the first public meeting on the question in London—it was the first popular sign of renewed life and energy on the part of the "Ten Hour Bill-men," since the rejection of their former leader by constituencies rioting under the Reform Act—it was the first time Lord Ashley had met in public the founders and principal supporters of that cause, which he had resolved to lead in parliament. The meeting was addressed by the Lord Mayor, the Hon. Wm. Duncombe [Lord Feversham], Rev. G. S. Bull, Mr O'Connell, M.P., Mr T. W. Helps, Col. Williams, M.P., Mr G. Lyall, Mr Oastler, Mr H. Pownall, Mr J. H. Freeze, Mr M. T. Sadler, and Lord Ashley.

The following resolutions were unanimously adopted:—

"1st. That it appears to this meeting, from the evidence before the select committee on Mr Sadler's Factories' Regulation Bill, and from the testimony of many highly respectable persons well and practically acquainted with the factory system, that it is the ordinary practice to work the children of the poor, chiefly females, in the manufacturing districts (who must either submit to that system or starve), from

six o'clock in the morning, or before, to seven, eight, or nine o'clock at night, in a standing position, and in a vitiated atmosphere, with very insufficient intervals for meals and recreation ; and that in time of brisk trade these evils are greatly aggravated.

"2nd. That this great city, the metropolis of a Christian and commercial empire, and justly famed for its institutions of mercy, is bound to express its conviction that 'the gains of oppression are a national loss,' and to declare its deep sympathy towards factory children of this empire, whose sufferings under the present system have been fully developed in the evidence before the select committee on Mr Sadler's bill, and for whose protection as well as for the general good of society, an effective legislative enactment is imperatively called for.

"That this meeting rejoices to perceive that the bill introduced by Mr Sadler, during the last session of parliament, and supported by the evidence collected by his indefatigable exertions, is taken up by the Right Honourable Lord Ashley ; and that his lordship is supported by the zealous cooperation of the operatives of the empire, for the protection of whose children that bill is designed."

The following petition was unanimously adopted :

"To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in parliament assembled.

"The humble petition of the undersigned friends of the society for improving the condition of factory children, unanimously agreed to at a meeting convened by public advertisement, at the City of London Tavern, Bishopsgate Street, on Saturday the 23rd day of February, 1833, for the purpose of requesting your honourable house to take into consideration the condition of the children and young persons employed in the cotton, flax, silk, woollen, and worsted mills and factories, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

"Humbly showeth,

"That your petitioners feel that the disgraceful and heart-rending disclosures which have from time to time been made by select committees of your honourable house, more especially by that held during the last session of the late parliament, relative to the undue and excessive working of children and young persons in the cotton, flax, silk, woollen, and worsted mills and factories of the United Kingdom, render it the bounden duty of your petitioners to press upon your honourable house the redress of wrongs, which, as affecting the infantile and youthful portion of the population, your petitioners are persuaded have no parallel in any age or country.

"That your petitioners are deeply impressed with the conviction that the interposition of the legislature to regulate the factory system, is called for, not only by the principles of humanity and justice, but by those of sound commercial policy; and that the lasting wealth, strength, and happiness, of a nation are incompatible with a system which is not only destructive of the health, the morals, and the social and domestic comforts of the manufacturing classes in general, but essentially ruinous to the physical and mental powers of the rising generation.

"That while your petitioners feel it to be a barbarous and revolting feature of the present factory system, that the injuries which it inflicts fall with peculiar severity on children of the weaker sex, occasioning, as they advance in years, a recklessness of character which renders them a prey to the seductions by which they are surrounded, your petitioners are convinced that its evils are not confined to any age or sex, but that morals, social order, and Christianity, are deeply outraged by their continuance; and that unless they are arrested by the strong arm of the legislature, the community at large must, at no distant period, participate in the fatal results.

"That your petitioners implore your honourable house to recognise and acknowledge, on behalf of the poor, that principle upon which our courts of equity have long acted where property is concerned; that while protection and guardianship are extended to the orphan children of the rich for their security, it may not be deemed beneath the dignity of parliament to interfere to protect the helpless children of the poor, but industrious, classes in that which too often constitutes their sole property—their power and capacity to labour; and that with reference to this consideration, your honourable house will allow the medical evidence which was taken before the late select committee, and, above all, the comparative statement of mortality which is thereto appended, to have their due weight in your decision.

"Your petitioners entreat your honourable house, that for this purpose you will be pleased to adopt the bill of which Lord Ashley has given notice that he will move the introduction, being a measure similar to that proposed by Mr Sadler in the last session of parliament, with such alterations and additions as may be found expedient; limiting the time of working children and young persons employed in the cotton, flax, silk, woollen, and worsted mills and other factories of the United Kingdom to ten hours per day for five days of the week, and eight hours on the Saturday; and excluding children under nine years of age from being so employed under any circumstances whatsoever. And your petitioners also humbly entreat your honourable house that you will be pleased to direct that the working of children and young persons in the cases aforesaid, shall be comprised within twelve continuous hours, and arranged so as most to subserve their comfort and improvement; and lastly, that your honourable house will be pleased to enforce the provisions of the said bill by such degrees and descriptions of punishment as to your wisdom shall appear most likely to secure and compel their observance.

"And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c."

These resolutions and the petition indicate a new phase in the progress of the factory movement: they are founded upon the evidence of the Sadler committee. The statements contained in that report were of so strong and decided a kind, as, if once admitted, to force restrictive legislation. The truthfulness of these statements was maintained by every speaker competent, from experience, to pronounce a judgment. At few public meetings have speeches more remarkable for practical knowledge or eloquence been delivered. The late Mr O'Connell was, beyond all doubt, essentially an orator: his speech at the London Tavern is an excellent specimen of eloquence; it is full of condensed feeling and stimulating thought. Few indeed could have concentrated more matter and sympathy into so few words, or met the strong points urged in opposition with so masterly a skill. Mr O'Connell said—"The resolution, in which he warmly and heartily concurred, was to the effect that 'the meeting were convinced that the gains of oppression were a national loss, and that legislative interference on the subject of the condition of factory children was imperatively called for,' and he was determined to support it with all his energies. He (Mr O'Connell) was a father, and could, therefore, feel an individual sympathy for these poor children. Who would not promote infant enjoyment? With what feelings, then, could he regard that abominable system which changed the brightest period of human life into a frightful desert, and which deprived those wretched beings of the enjoyment of that part of human existence in which nature indemnifies herself by anticipation for all the after miseries of life? With this feeling he had often asked how parents could be induced to rend asunder the dearest strings of life: how the mother could forget the pangs which she had endured for the safety and happiness of her little ones, and consent

to sacrifice them on the altar of the factory Moloch? The answer which he had received on these occasions terrified him; it was, want—wretchedness—misery—starvation. Nothing but starvation could ever interfere between the mother and the protection of her infants: nothing but actual want and the fear of their starvation could induce such a violation of all the maternal feelings. Good God! that such a system should exist in a Christian country; that poor infants should be condemned to the deprivation of sleep, the inhalation of poison, and the endurance of the extremes of human anguish, to obtain a miserable pittance to save themselves and their parents, perhaps, from starvation. The question was a question of blood, and those who should stand by and acquiesce in the continuance of such a system, after the facts which had been stated, would be guilty of murder. He (Mr O'Connell) knew that it was wrong in principle to interfere between the master and the labourer in questions of political economy; but, was this a question of political economy? His heart told him it was not, and that where the parental feelings are in question political economy itself must give way. The King, as the father of the orphans in his empire, has a power to protect them. This power he delegates to the Lord Chancellor in the cases of the children of the rich, and as soon as any pounds, shillings, and pence, are discovered to attach to those children, that legal functionary interferes to protect them. Why should not the poor children of the empire be protected in the same manner? Why should not they have a Lord Chancellor to watch over them? The answer would be, that those children have no property; but was not the labour of those children their property, and ought not they to be protected and provided with the means of properly exercising it? It had been said that the evidence given before the parliamentary committee, had been got up for the occasion, and that the promoters of it were a set of enthusiasts, whose judgment was swallowed up by their

feelings. But this was a public committee, and evidence in contradiction could have been openly given ; nor were the scenes of those atrocities closed from the public eye—on the contrary, every manufactory was open to be viewed, and was proved, by concurrent testimony, to be a hive of swarming misery. The miserable creatures themselves, too, were brought before the committee, and their sunken eyes, hectic cheeks, emaciated limbs, on which was stamped the decrepitude of premature old age, spoke for them and gave a fearful corroboration to their testimony. He (Mr. O'Connell), notwithstanding the arguments which had been urged in its support, could not believe that such a system of cruelty was necessary for the commercial prosperity of the country ; it made the few rich rapidly, but if the same riches could be obtained at the expense of a little delay, could it be questioned that it would be preferable? He trusted that he should not be mistaken in supporting the cause—the cause of those who had no protector, no voice but the voice of humanity ; and that it should have the support of all his energies, humble as they were, he pledged himself. It was said that the number of hours to which it was proposed to reduce the labour of these children was too small, but he was surprised that human nature could bear, under such circumstances, to work even that number of hours. He, for himself, considered that ten hours were too many, but as medical men, and men of experience had decided that labour during that period could be borne, he should go along with them to that extent, but he would not consent to the addition of one half-hour, nay, not one minute, beyond the time so decided to be capable of being endured. He had heard that there would be much opposition to this proposed reduction, but he trusted that public feeling would render such opposition fruitless, and as he did not wish to introduce any remarks of a political tendency, although his breast was swelling and his mind tortured by such questions, he would

confine himself to proposing the resolution." The speech of Mr Oastler is not less remarkable than that of Mr O'Connell. It is not less eloquent, its value is increased by an array of facts, such only as a man of Mr Oastler's close habits of observation could narrate; his speech contained the kernel of the question, and exhibited to the mind of England, at one view, the strong points of the case in favour of factory regulation, and much additional evidence on the cruelties practised in the district of Yorkshire with which he was intimately acquainted. Mr Oastler said:—

"I will not enter into the evidence given before the House of Commons, but will state what I, an impartial witness, have seen. In my district little children under seven years of age are sometimes made to work for eighteen, and in some cases for twenty hours out of the twenty-four. It is impossible that the factory children could exist under such labour, and the churchyards had proved that they were not long able to do so. I assure you, it is no uncommon thing that a child should be beaten with a heavy strap, laid on by a heavy hand, till its back and its breast are black. I have seen a little child, not more than ten years of age, who, being tired, had spoiled a piece of yarn three inches long, (the value of which there is no coin low enough to express), was dreadfully beaten. That child lived within a mile of my house, and I have counted thirty-three cuts on its back. In a mill at Wigan, the children, for any slight neglect, are loaded with weights of twenty pounds, placed over their shoulders, and hanging behind their backs. Then there is a murderous instrument, called a billy-roller, about eight feet long, and one inch and a half in diameter, with which many children have been knocked down, and in some instances, I believe, murdered. In cotton mills the labour is restricted to twelve hours by Act of Parliament; but that is too long for any child to labour in this country,

or in any part of the globe. The factory children, rising in the morning long before the rise of the sun or the dawn of day, some without shoes or stockings, might be seen dragging their weary bodies through the rain and snow along the streets of Christian Manchester; long before the shops were open, long before any one was stirring, except the scavengers, these little children may be seen in the streets of that great town. The parents are during this time in bed, and in hundreds of instances they have no other means of subsistence than the wages of their children's death. The little creatures thus bred up, when they do not fall into crime and come to an ignominious end, drag on a short life of misery and degradation. Thus it is that these sons and daughters of the heroes of Waterloo and Trafalgar are rewarded. Is this state of things to be endured? I doubt not that the humanity of the country will shout forth an answer in the negative. If England refuse to interfere in this matter, the God of little children will strike her, powerful as she is, and make her tremble. This is not, I know it is not, a meeting where politics should be alluded to—but I hope I may be allowed to mention one fact, which strikingly develops the misery occasioned by the factory system. No one here will deny that there is misery in Ireland, that there is poverty in Ireland, or that Ireland has suffered wrongs. At Manchester the other day, I heard the Rev. Mr Haines, Roman Catholic priest, exclaim, after eight years' residence in Manchester, and after fully considering the wretchedness of his native country—'Ireland, with all thy poverty and all thy wrongs, rather than Manchester with all thy wealth and thy factory system!' It has been asserted, that the volume which lies before you is a volume of ex-parte evidence. Surely enough has been said this day, and surely the character of the medical profession alone is enough to satisfy the public that that evidence could not have been taken ex parte. The committee had the opportunity of

cross-examining the witnesses. I myself underwent a cross-examination, and, at all events, they had an opportunity of shaking the evidence that was given, if it had been in their power. The evidence of the medical gentlemen was founded on an experience, some of them of forty to sixty years; and, as the engineers of the human body—men who must know whether the steam-engine of the human body was of a ten or of a twelve-hours power—they unanimously decided, that it was scarcely of a ten hours' power. Next came the testimony of the operatives. Now he had no doubt it would be very convenient to some to prevent the testimony of the operatives being taken at all, but that day had not arrived, and, he trusted, never would come. When we sent up operatives—friends, of course, to the cause—to be examined in London, headed by their worthy champion, Sadler, they were selected with the greatest care. Many who would have been sent up were left at home, lest they might be discharged by their respective employers. A great many of those who did come, were discharged on their return. Talk of tyranny, he knew nothing to equal that amongst any of the heathen nations—a man to be punished by a petty tyrant, for obeying the law of the land, is a new thing under the sun! There was a boy whose case was certainly deserving of being brought before their notice—a boy who, when seven years of age, had actually to be 'trailed' (the Yorkshire phrase), a couple of miles, to perform twelve or fourteen hours' work every day. He was 'trailed' to his work by an elder brother and sister holding him up under the arms. That boy was well formed originally, and was now deformed in every limb, though only seventeen years of age. Thank God, his mind has not been contaminated—his character was good. He was charged by his master—Addison, of Bradford—with having come to London, and there told the grossest falsehoods. That same Addison, of Bradford, distinctly stated in the newspapers, that words

had been put into his mouth, and alluded to the Rev. Mr Bull as the prompter of the boy. He also alleged that the poor boy was in concealment lest he should turn traitor. Addison thought the orphan was friendless, but it soon appeared that he was no longer under the tyrant's rod; that he had friends to assist him if he spoke the truth, and those who would condemn him, if he resorted to subterfuge. The poor boy was not in concealment, though Addison himself once was. The orphan was put to the Leeds Lancastrian school. The Short Time Committee of Huddersfield procured a copy of his evidence given in the House of Commons; they found that it was substantially true in every respect, and Mr Osborn, of Leeds, who acted as his foster-father, and myself, offered to enter into a public examination of the circumstances; the short-time committee undertook to pay half the expenses of publishing the examination, and thus leave the public to judge whether the boy were correct or not; but the accuser has concealed himself from us ever since. There were some other matters ventured to be put forth in the public papers, equally without foundation; and here I must say that the newspapers have always been ready, at least, to give poverty fair play. I publicly, humbly, but sincerely thank the press for the way they have taken up the sacred, the holy, and the righteous cause of these helpless individuals. To return to the subject of the witnesses who had been examined before the committee. A man of the name of Brown, of Leeds, charged a witness of the name of Drake with falsehood. Drake told him, in the public paper, that he had not even told all he knew, and Brown was silent. As far as I know—and I have good reason to know much—that book of evidence, filled as it is with mourning, lamentation, and woe, is true; but does not, cannot, contain the whole truth. One-tenth of the miseries of the little children can never be revealed on earth; that exposure must be reserved for the great day

of account. There are cruelties of such an indecent nature committed, that if they were told they would scarcely be credited. We have to understate, rather than overpaint the picture ; but if those monsters persist, we shall be compelled to outrage the lines of decency, and tell the world what tyrants—what monsters they are. There had been many difficulties raised in our path, as we travelled onwards in Yorkshire and Lancashire. I have been myself charged, over and over again, with being a great enemy to the emancipation of the blacks. But I deny that charge, having, even in my teens, under Mr Wilberforce, fought to obtain negro emancipation. I remember the time when the cry for negro emancipation was not so fashionable in Yorkshire as it is at this moment ; and the very persons who were formerly disposed to hoot and to hiss me for advocating the emancipation of the blacks, are now disposed to treat me in the same way, for coming forward to support the emancipation of the white slaves. They are anxious in every way to burke the question. That question, like many others, had cost a great deal of money. There is one individual who is in the room at this moment, who has himself expended thousands of pounds upon it. I have often had occasion to go to that fountain of benevolence, but I can go no more—not that I have ever been sent empty away, (I have always been more than amply replenished), but it is impossible for any person to expect that one individual only is to bear all the expense. For my own part, my little all is gone. It has been but little—I wished it well. The battle is now for the emancipation of British children. The question is, whether British children should be murdered or not murdered, whether the bill, which is to impose eleven or twelve hours' work on delicate and half-starved children, is to receive the sanction of the law—or whether the measure entrusted to Lord Ashley is to pass into a law. The battle

will have to be fought against a powerful, a malicious, a wealthy foe. The operatives are subscribing—nay, the very children, out of their miserable pittance, were subscribing to carry forward their measure of emancipation ; and surely, when British fathers and British mothers have heard of the deplorable state in which these helpless children are placed, it will not be considered too much to ask for a mite from them, in aid of this great work of reform. I conclude by seconding the resolution."

A very considerable number of mill-owners were anxious for a compromise, and their desires found a response in the House of Commons, a circumstance which gave to the London Tavern meeting additional importance. It was this fear of compromise, united with a determination not to make any concession, which caused the various speakers to refer especially to the question of time ; in no speech was this one point made more prominent, than in that of the Hon. William Duncombe, who was always understood to be a principal representative of the opinions of the operatives of Yorkshire on the Factory question, and was honoured by them as "a nobleman" in the literal sense of the word, as well as a mark of social distinction.

" The Hon. William Duncombe, M.P. for the North Riding of Yorkshire, begged to assure the respectable meeting which he saw then assembled, that his most strenuous efforts in parliament should be directed to the great object of protecting that helpless and hitherto unprotected class of young creatures employed in the factories of this great, wealthy, and commercial country. Feeling, as he did, the deepest anxiety for the success of the great object which they all pursued, he would still take the liberty of suggesting to them, to pursue that object with the greatest caution, for they were sure to encounter the most formidable enemies in their honourable, he might say glorious attempt of establishing the ten hours' system. He entirely concurred with the honourable and

learned member for Dublin, that they should not abate a single moment of the proposed exemption ; to one second beyond the ten hours' labour he would not agree. He was aware it might be said, that the evidence in the book which then lay on their table (the Sadler report,) was 'got up,' was 'partial,' and therefore in no respect deserving of the credence which the society were disposed to bestow upon it. But could they remain insensible to the evidence given by the medical gentlemen, whose impartiality could not for a moment be questioned—he meant the medical men,—and they were nanimous in the opinion that more than ten hours' labour the human constitution could not endure ? When he represented the whole county of York, he had often presented petitions for the abolition of both negro and infant slavery, and a pleasing duty it was. He need scarcely say, that if any more petitions were sent to him upon the subject, they should have his most strenuous support. He would only further say, as had been expressed by Mr O'Connell, that to no other bill would he give his support, unless the time was shortened in place of being extended. To no bill with a moment more than ten hours would he ever agree."

Mr Sadler's speech was remarkably comprehensive, indicating a grasp of mind and a warmth of heart never more thoroughly united than in the public life of this benevolent statesman. Mr Sadler assured that assembly "That he felt no regret whatever in having been excluded from the House of Commons, but what resulted from a wish to have brought to a successful issue that and other measures, which he thought were also alluded to in the terms of the very flattering resolution which the meeting had kindly adopted; and, indeed, that regret respecting the factory bill entirely gave way, when he reflected that his noble friend, who was coupled with him in the vote of thanks, succeeded to his labours, escaping all the odium which he should

have had to encounter for his advocacy of that and similar measures, as well as for other reasons, and bringing as his noble friend did, to the sacred task, the advantages of exalted rank and great attainments, and above all, a firm and religious determination never to abandon that cause which he had undertaken,—undertaken he could assure that meeting, with a reluctance which nothing but a high sense of duty, and an irresistible impulse of benevolence could have subdued. For himself he (Mr Sadler) felt it to have been enough for him, in the construction of this temple of mercy, to have laboured at the foundation ; he trusted and confidently hoped, that it was reserved for another and happier hand, erelong to lay the top stone, amidst the joyful congratulations of the entire country, in which none would join more enthusiastically than himself. In the meantime, however, he begged to observe, that his noble friend would, in the arduous task in which he had engaged need all their support. The apologists of the system, the pamphlets of one of whom he held in his hand, had said that 'the necessity for the long and destructive hours of labour imposed upon the poor children of this country, had to be traced to the imperfect political institutions, the heavy taxes, the immense debt of this country.' Vain excuses, indeed, while it was seen at the same time that the employed were thus maltreated, outraged, and over-laboured, for very inadequate wages, the employers, often from the lower ranks of the community, became suddenly and immensely rich. But to pass by these, it was well known that the factory system, as far as it had been established in America, was accompanied by precisely the same atrocity : indeed, he could assure the meeting, that he had had many American newspapers sent to him since he had agitated the question, in which it was stated, that a similar provision to that which he had endeavoured to obtain, was fully as necessary in America as in England. To what, then, could those long imprison-

ing and destructive hours of labour be attributed? Not to high taxation, that was moderate—not to an immense debt, there was none. To nothing but to the tyranny and domination of the capitalists, spurred on by the lust of gain, who had ever pursued that course, and would still do so, till the strong arm of the law arrested their guilty career in both countries, and which the journalist in question asserted, was as necessary in the *new* world as in the *old*. Away, then, with these apologies for the tyranny of exorbitant wealth (as bad as that of unlimited power), and let the law protect and preserve those helpless beings who will never otherwise be defended, whatever be the wealth of the institutions of the country tolerating them. He might proceed to notice the other excuses put forth by the willing panders of wealth and power, such as the want of education and of character in the lower classes, as originating this state of things. Education! He would be glad to know how these poor little beings were to obtain education? After a day's toil like that at present tolerated, the idea of adding mental labour to the bodily labour already endured, and additional confinement to what had been already so oppressive, was to inflict additional physical evils without the chance of adequately compensating them by any moral advantage to be so derived. Much was said about 'the schoolmaster being abroad'—he would ask, how and when he was to find 'at home' these his oppressed pupils? The talk of providing for the education of the children of the poor in our populous districts, without commencing with abridging their hours of labour, was mere cant and hypocrisy."

The spirit which animated Lord Ashley, on entering upon the footprints of Sadler, has been distinctly stated in his Lordship's own words. His speech at the London Tavern contains a full declaration of his state of mind, and an unreserved acknowledgment of the services of his

parliamentary predecessor. Lord Ashley said "he could never be indifferent to the approbation of his fellow-countrymen; if he were so, he would distrust himself, feeling, as he did, that a disregard of honest fame is almost invariably accompanied by a disregard of virtue; but he did most solemnly assure the meeting that he did not take up this affair from motives of ambition. Strong and deep sentiments impelled him to that course; there were some there who could testify it; for when he found (and he had but few hours to make up his mind) that upon him depended the furtherance or the loss of Mr Sadler's bill, he did not (he used the word deliberately) dare to refuse. The confidence they reposed in him was a generous anticipation, but as to the thanks they had given him, he did not deserve them. It was by the voice of Mr Sadler that the people of England had been aroused from their apathy, and he in return had been assailed with obloquy, insult, and reproach, after collecting an amount of evidence which for its importance and accuracy, had rarely been equalled and never surpassed; and yet that was the man who, to the great loss of the country, had been rejected from that house which he had adorned, and excluded from the representation of that people whom he had so materially served. It was, therefore, with the utmost regret, that he found himself called upon to take up the bill which had been introduced originally by their excellent friend, Mr Sadler; that virtuous and amiable man had borne all the burden and heat of the day, and now he (Lord Ashley) came in to reap the abundant harvest that Mr Sadler had sown; but he should most unwillingly find himself in the situation in which Louis the XIV always endeavoured to stand. That contemptible monarch desired great military reputation without having any military talents. When the siege of a town was going forward, he waited till the town was on the point of surrendering;

he immediately took care to come to the spot, receive the keys, and carry off, on his unworthy brow, all the laurels which courage and ability had won. However, upon reflection, he did not much fear but that the people of England would do ample justice to such a man as Mr Sadler. They would feel that by whomsoever the work might be nominally conducted to its conclusion, its real completion would have been owing to him, and to him alone. Remote posterity would bless his labours, and the enduring gratitude of millions would inseparably associate his name with that great measure. He most sincerely wished that some one of capacious mind and profound knowledge, had undertaken this task ; so deep and so various were the objects to be considered. It was a great political, moral, and religious question ; it was political because we should herein decide whether thousands should be left in perpetual discontent, aye, and just discontent; it was moral, because we must decide whether the rising generation should learn to distinguish between good and evil—be raised above the enjoyment of brutal sensualities, and be no longer, as now they are, degraded from the dignity of thinking beings. It was a great religious question ; for it involved the means to thousands and tens of thousands of beings brought up in the faith and fear of the God that created them. He remembered in the days of his boyhood, to have read of those who sacrificed their children to Moloch, but they were a merciful people compared with Englishmen in the nineteenth century. He had heard of the infanticide of the Indians, but they too were a merciful people compared with Englishmen in the nineteenth century. For these nations destroyed at once their wretched offspring, and prevented a long career of sorrowing and crime ; but we, having sucked out every energy of body and of soul, toss them upon the world a mass of skin and bone, incapable of exertion, brutalised in their understandings, and disqualified for immortality. He feared that in the House of Commons

they would have to encounter great and formidable opposition, but it was gratifying to think that all the masters were not against them, neither were they without numerous and cordial supporters in the house ; but it behoved those who were out of doors to use their best and most strenuous exertions to guard against the possible failure of the bill. There was but one consideration to which he particularly wished to call their attention, namely, that before the publication of the evidence, the people of England had nothing like the responsibility which since rested upon their heads. So long as these horrid truths remained unknown, the guilt attached to the perpetrators only ; but if we now permit this terrible system to be any longer continued, the guilt will descend upon the whole nation. Before he sat down he begged to assure them that he should not give way a single moment on the question of the ten hours. He assured the meeting that he should persevere in the cause he had commenced. He had taken up the measure as a matter of conscience, and as such he was determined to carry it through. If the house would not adopt the bill, they must drive him from it, as he would not concede a single step. He most positively declared, that as long as he had a seat in that house, and God gave him health and a sound mind, no efforts, no exertion, should be wanted on his part to establish the success of the measure. If defeated in the present session, he would bring it forward in the next, and so on in every succeeding session till his success was complete."

The proceedings of this meeting received all the publicity usually accorded to important public gatherings, to consider questions of great and vital importance. Oastler, Sadler, and O'Connell were names of great weight ; the interest inseparable from their speeches was increased by the nature of the subject discussed. No orator ever possessed a more thorough mastery over a people than did Mr O'Connell over the Irish. In politics he was the idol of their adoration

and the director of their actions. He was said to be a descendant from the kings of Ireland; he was absolute monarch of the Irish population of the Roman Catholic Church. Every city, town, and village in the manufacturing districts of England and Scotland has its "little Ireland," as a district in Manchester is aptly named. Every "little Ireland" had its spiritual ruler, who acted in obedience to his superiors in the Church. The adoption of the factory question by Mr O'Connell was an event of great moment. He brought to the cause which he espoused not only personal talent and energy of the highest order, but talent and energy backed by the organized authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The late Mr O'Connell was essentially an apostle of the Papacy; and within these islands, on all secular questions, the leader of the Roman Catholic clergy: his voluntary union with Oastler and Sadler in their crusade against the unregulated factory system, was, consequently, in the eyes of all concerned, an act of importance. The London Tavern meeting showed to the country and to parliament, that Mr Sadler's absence from the House of Commons was not the means of destroying interest in the factory question. In all great questions, men are the representatives of interests rather than their originators. A great cause may suffer, but cannot possibly be lost, because of the position of its advocates. This truth was illustrated in the factory agitation; it had found root in the heart of the British nation, and was destined to increase in interest and power, in defiance of all losses and the most persevering opposition. Mr Sadler's zeal and resolution on behalf of the factory operatives were unabated: with him it could not be otherwise; his policy rested upon what he devoutly believed to be the Rock of Truth, and for that reason knew no change. He cast the shadow of his approval over the adoption of the factory question by Lord Ashley, and side by side with Oastler and Bull, Michael Thomas Sadler

felt as resolute of purpose as when he first resolved to present to an unwilling Legislature a full-length portrait of the miseries endured by the helpless victims of an insatiable thirst for gold.

The citizens of London, in the daily intercourse of their lives, were remote from the ocular observation of the effects of unregulated factory labour on health. To awaken a portion of them to a sense of their duty on a question of national interest, was not an easy task. The London Committee and their active friends were assiduous in their efforts, and conspicuously so was Mr Underwood, a London tradesman, for many years an active member of the Marylebone vestry, and in a parochial capacity distinguished for his advocacy of the interests of the poor. Mr Underwood was an energetic promoter of factory regulation, and enjoyed the confidence and friendship of Mr Sadler and Mr Oastler. As a tradesman, his character for probity was deservedly high; his well-known philanthropy won for him the regard of many who were his opponents on social and political questions ; the influence of his example and the value of his support were consequently enhanced. It is upwards of twenty-three years since his soul yearned to serve the cause of the workers in factories; it is now his privilege in an honourable old age to reflect on the results of his labours combined with those of others. Such reflection cannot be otherwise than pleasing, for his efforts were at all times well-intended and perseveringly pursued, and were eminently effective, in common with those of the Committee of the London Society for the improvement of the condition of factory children, in making known in London and its neighbourhood the grievous evils of the unregulated factory system.

Those proceedings in London caused much excitement throughout the country, and contributed to renew the hope and increase the vigour of all the leading supporters of the

factory movement. Many meetings were held in Yorkshire and Lancashire; one of the most important was in the Manor Court House, Manchester, in April, 1833; it was addressed by Mr Oastler, Mr John Wood, and the Rev. G. S. Bull. The last-named gentleman's address was specially illustrative of what he, as a Christian minister, believed to be the duty of the ministers of the gospel of Christ in their recognized capacity as the instructors and guides of a Christian people. The reverend gentleman said :—

"I am intrusted by the Manchester Short Time Committee with a resolution.

"Approving, as I do, of the assertion made in the last sentence of this resolution, referring to the demoralizing effects of the factory system, I stand here for the first time in this metropolis of the factory world, to demand, not for the first, nor for the hundredth time, nor yet I trust for the last time, that infant slavery shall be abolished.

"It were easy, sir, for me to show that legislators and factory proprietors are 'verily guilty concerning this thing,' and that the system has indurated or petrified in many cases the parental heart itself, so that even 'the mother' has sometimes 'forgotten' to love and pity her own — her all but 'sucking child.' But, leaving the senator, the capitalist, and the monster, for others to deal with, I shall direct my respectful and earnest appeal to those who, like myself, profess to be the ministers of that Divine Redeemer who went about doing good, and to whom the speaking countenance of infancy and the imploring eye of misery were never lifted in vain. My object, sir, in selecting for observation the conduct of the Manchester ministers respecting the Ten Hours' Bill is not to exalt myself in the comparison. Sincerely do I assure you that I am, or have been, most deservedly in the same condemnation.

"And if, since I awoke from my lethargy, my pillow has been robbed of rest and my days of comfort, even then I

have expiated (as far as my fellow man is concerned) but a small part of the guilt and of past neglect. But, sir, I want to learn how it is, that in this dense population, among whom, perhaps, nearly seventy stated ministers of various denominations reside, only two should have appeared as public advocates of this most humane and righteous cause.

"It cannot be because, like Moses, they are 'slow of speech,' for I myself have heard, seen, or read the fervid eloquence of your Stowells, your Newtons, and your McAlls, at Bible, missionary, tract, and anti-slavery meetings, to all of which I wish most heartily, God speed.

"It cannot be from want of example. The clergy of the Church of England might be edified by the noble and virtuous example of the venerable Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who are, and have been from the first, hearty friends of this cause, and the former of whom lately told me that I was quite in my duty as a clergyman to stand in the gap for the poor factory children. The Wesleyans have the edifying pattern of William Dawson, that plain honest Christian; and surely the Dissenters might safely copy Hamilton, of Leeds, and John Wilks, of London, who are both our friends.

"It cannot be from ignorance of the destructive and baneful effects of the present system of factory labour. They learn that daily and nightly. The Sunday school declares it,—the sick and dying bed reveals it,—the churchyard witnesses it,—each funeral knell proclaims it, and multiplied insults to morality, sobriety, and to the Almighty God himself, confirm it in every street of your city.

"It cannot be from ignorance of Scripture example. They know that Abraham, the father of the faithful, was thus commended of his God, 'I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice.' And the ministers of Manchester know that avarice denies

to poverty and industry the time necessary for domestic intercourse and family religion ; so that your Godless system of getting riches, or trying to get them, by long hours of machinery labour, stamps the master as the opposite to Abraham by guilt, whilst the operative's family is rendered so by dire necessity. The ministers of Manchester know that when Jacob, on his return to the land of his fathers, was urged by his appeased brother Esau to hasten his company forward, he said, 'Let my lord pass on before, I will lead on softly, according as the children shall be able to endure,' but they know that the possessors of wealth, too often unlike the patriarch, disregard what 'the children can endure,' and only calculate what the spindle can produce. [A voice from the crowd, 'Thou'll never be a bishop.'] Your boasted mechanical prosperity has taken you into deep waters, until Mr Gisborne, the apologist of the masters, tells you, in his place in parliament, that a Christian nation—a land of unparalleled plenty, of unexampled industry, of unrivalled splendour,—'whose merchants are princes' and dwell in palaces, 'ceiled with cedar and painted with vermillion,'—that this land, the queen of nations and the perfection of beauty, has now, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, to legislate 'between too much work and too little to eat,' whilst he, forsooth, is selling black diamonds [Mr G. had large collieries at or near Duckenfield]—with very small profits, no doubt, to the lords of the steam engine and the spindle and the loom.

"The ministers of Manchester know that when the political economists of Egypt consulted to deal wisely and *à la* Malthus with the 'superabundant' and 'redundant' Israelites, by throwing the babes into the Nile, and working the adults to death, Jehovah himself demanded satisfaction for their wrongs, and taught Egypt's scornful despot at length to set the captive free. Moses and Aaron, their great examples, braved all the frowns of Egypt's tyrants,

and delivered their message without regard to earthly station or sordid respectability. When that great legislator, appointed by his God, had led that remarkable and favoured people to the wilderness, he gave them statutes and judgments, and a very considerable and most important part of them had direct reference to the care of the poor and the defence of the helpless. One of these remarkable precepts was this:—'Thou shalt not oppress the hireling in his wages, but thou shalt fear thy God.' David, too, had crowded his inspired verse with many a precept for the care of the poor, and many a promise to those who love them, like unto this—'Blessed is the man that considereth the poor. The Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble—the Lord shall preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed in the earth.' Had not Solomon, too, given us all a warning in his Proverbs, xxiv, 11, 12: 'If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain—If thou sayest, 'behold we knew it not,' Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it, and he that keepeth thy soul doth not he know it, and shall not he render to every man according to his works?' and may we especially who are ministers, hear it and attend. What did Isaiah say to the oppressors of Israel? 'Wash you and make you clean—put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well—seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow,' and on no less than these conditions would he make to that favoured nation the proposals of reconciliation. Were not all the prophets persecuted for their fidelity in rebuking the oppressor? and did not the apostles of that Divine Saviour, whom the Manchester ministers profess to serve, cry aloud against the heartless avarice of the 'respectable' of their generation? What said the undaunted James? 'Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields (had he lived now he would

have said, 'worked so long in your factories for so little') —which is from you kept back by fraud—crieth—and the cries of the reapers (he might have said the poor factory children) have entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.' But above all, the Lord of Glory Himself made it the chief part of his employment while dwelling among us in our flesh, to unmask the hypocritical Pharisee, whose garments were phylacteried with the oracles of God—who fasted and who prayed in the corners of the market, but whose hands were full of blood—doomed were they to the 'greater damnation.' And I now tell the ministers of Manchester, and I tell the religious people, that God abhors robbery for burnt offering, and that the rich would do better to give the hireling his due wages than to adorn the subscription list of fifty excellent institutions with large sums of money wrung from the sinews of tender infancy worn down with protracted and unwholesome toil. Why then do not the ministers of Manchester come forward to the help of the factory child? Surely there is poverty enough to attract their notice in the midst of all this dazzling wealth. Your numerous institutions for the relief of the indigent, clearly prove the existence of a vicious system. Great and noble as is the purpose of your public charities, in a world where misery, the offspring of sin, must always be found, I hold that the best charity of all is to put the labourer in a condition to help himself, and to excite him to honest industry by a due reward. Let him have too, time to rest, to cultivate his mind, to instruct his family and to worship his God; of all which blessings, thousands are utterly deprived by your present system. Do not the ministers of this town feel that your system in factories obstructs them in their holy office and invades their province? I met one of them but yesterday, who lamented this fact: I lamented too. I live amidst factories, and I say to the legislature:—

'Either declare my office useless and abolish it at once, or else give me at least the Ten Hours' Bill.'

"Let us trifle no longer. The love of their country should excite all professed ministers of the gospel to help us. They see a population, the alternate sport of exhaustion and excitement; how can such a state of things issue, but in the very dissolution of society? Their peace of conscience is surely involved in the part they take in the cause of degraded infancy and childhood. They are the servants of him, who though rich, yet for our sakes became poor—of him who rebuked those who would have kept the children from him, and who, had he sojourned in proud commercial Manchester, would have denounced her, though 'exalted to heaven,' as the seat of a system that will bring her 'down to hell,' unless she repents.

"Your ministers, sir, must stand too one day before a dread tribunal, where it will be as with the servant so with his master, as with the rich so with the poor. What then will become of worldly respectability? Will it shield from an omniscient and impartial judge the man who sought his gains in the destruction of his fellow, or the minister who stood by and reproved them not? There, sir, the thin disguise of worldly influence will be torn away, and there the wrongs of infancy shall be avenged. (The cheers here continued for several minutes.)

"I am not insensible, fellow-countrymen, to your approbation, but I would speak the truth if you were to hiss instead of cheer. I can reprove the sins of the poor, and I do it; they too need it very greatly indeed. But I will deal fairly, and I never found the poor to hate me for being faithful, if I did not smooth over the sins of the rich." Mr Bull then referred to the present position of the Ten Hours' Bill, and stated that measures to defeat its subtle and cowardly foes, had been taken by a numerous meeting of the delegates of the operatives of England and

Scotland, then sitting in Manchester, and which he had been invited to attend. "And when (said Mr Bull) we can no longer sustain the struggle for the Ten Hours' Bill, we will turn it over to that sex (pointing to a group of females who were present) who will never be content with any place but the front rank in benevolence, and then who shall be able to resist? I for one, am settled never to flinch, never to cease, till our object is attained. And I hold this to be my duty to my country, to my office, and to my God. The firmer the foundation the better and the broader, the more sure will be the stability and prosperity of the superstructure, and that foundation, now so decayed, is to be found in the industrious and productive classes of society."

CHAPTER II.

APPOINTMENT OF A ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY—OBJECTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS—OPPOSITION IN THE COUNTRY—PROCESSIONS OF FACTORY CHILDREN IN MANCHESTER AND LEEDS—REPORT OF THE COMMISSION—THE LATE MR GEORGE CONDY, OF MANCHESTER—HIS SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE FACTORY CHILDREN.

THE importance which the question of factory labour had assumed in the eye of the country, and the untiring perseverance manifested by its leaders, could leave no doubt on the mind of any reasonable observer of the "signs of the times," that further legislation was imperative. Early in the session of 1833, Mr Wilson Patten made known his intention of moving,—"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, praying that he will be graciously pleased to appoint a commission to collect information in the manufacturing districts with respect to the employment of children in factories, and to devise the best means for the curtailment of their labours." Mr Wilson Patten was strengthened in his claims on the attention of the House of Commons by Lord Morpeth, who assured the house that the agreement between Mr Sadler and the opponents of his bill was, "That Mr Sadler should first call his evidence and go through his case, and then that the opponents of the bill should call and go through theirs, and when the last session ended, his opponents had not commenced." Lord Morpeth was

in favour of immediate legislation, and hoped by the bill which he intended to introduce "To reconcile all the leading parties, and bring this afflicting subject to a close." Mr Wilson Patten professed his anxiety not to delay legislation; he wished the "subject to be better understood," and desired further inquiry, "also for the purpose of clearing the characters of the masters from those imputations which seemed to be cast upon them by the friends of Mr Sadler's measure, but which further evidence would prove to be utterly unjustifiable." Petitions were presented from Stockport and Lancaster, praying for a commission, for the purposes stated by Mr Wilson Patten.

On April the 3rd, 1833, he brought his motion for the appointment of a Commission before the House. An animated debate followed. Lord Ashley and his supporters opposed the motion of Mr Wilson Patten. In consequence of this discussion, Mr Wilson Patten added to his original proposition a clause to the effect, that the suggested inquiry should be so conducted "as to enable the house to legislate upon the subject during the present session." Mr Wilson Patten was supported by the government, and his motion carried by a majority of one. The Ayes were 74—the Noes 73.

Mr Spring Rice (now Lord Monteagle) on behalf of the government, "did not think that any persons would refuse to answer questions put to them by the Commissioners; but if any person did refuse, there could be no doubt that the house would immediately pass a short bill to compel them to answer, and even upon oath, if required." The government pledged itself to lay the names of the Commissioners and their instructions on the table of the house—a promise which was not fulfilled. On the 3rd of June, Lord Ashley complained of "bad faith" on the part of the government. Lord Althorp answered Lord Ashley by saying that he had "forgot to lay the instructions before the house, but they were very full and consistent with what had been the

understanding of the house. It was the wish of ministers that the examination should be a fair *bona-fide* examination."

The commission having been appointed, proceeded without delay with its labours. The following are the names of the Commissioners :—Francis Bisset Hawkins, Thomas Southwood Smith, Sir David Barry, Thomas Tooke, Leonard Horner, John Elliot Drinkwater, Robert Mackintosh, James Stewart, John Welsford Cowell, Edward Carleton Tuffnell, Alfred Power, Edwin Chadwick, Stephen Woolriche, John Spencer and Charles Lowdon. John Wilson, Esq., was Secretary to the commission.

The instructions issued by the Central Board of Factory Commissioners to District Civil and Medical Commissioners, were of the most minute and searching kind, embracing the most secret as well as the most common practices of life. The inquiry professed to be thoroughly impartial and comprehensive, so that any measures founded upon information acquired should be as "complete and satisfactory as possible." The Central Board of Factory Commissioners, in their anxiety to acquire complete knowledge, wrote down so many heads of inquiry, as to warrant the inference that they had not formed just notions of the time necessary for proper answers to be given; medical practitioners, particularly, complained of their inability to give the answers required in the time allotted. The first loud note of alarm and condemnation against the instructions of the central board to the district commissioners, appeared in the columns of the *Times*, for June the 3rd, 1833:— "We have looked," said the editor, "into the instructions issued by the central board to the subordinate commissioners, and we are bound to acknowledge that they have puzzled us as completely as they could have done those for whose especial embarrassment they were no doubt intended. Such a mass of impotent and stupid verbiage it has seldom been our fortune to face, or so

much pomp and pretension, combined with such vagueness and apparent insincerity of purpose. The whole composition is on stilts; it is, besides, enveloped in innumerable folds of slip-slop phraseology, as if the entire object of the author, or authors, had been to complicate and mystify the simple question under examination, and to defeat, by artificial difficulties, the ostensible end of their own appointments.

"The instructions contain a diversity of plans for inquiring into questions but remotely connected with that from which the establishment of the commission had arisen, and, indeed, not entirely compatible with that wholesome dread of ridicule, and anxious love of decency, which ought to characterize the proceedings of such a body. We subjoin as a curiosity, some of the queries to be made of married women:—

"'Was your first child born within one year of your marriage?'

"'How many children have you had still-born?'

"'How many miscarriages?—In the first three months; in the next three months; in the last three months of pregnancy?'

"'How many of the births were difficult cases; requiring instruments; not requiring instruments?'

"The central board ought to be ashamed of itself; but boards are insensible to all such laudable emotions."

It is apparent that the instructions issued by the central board, were drawn up upon the perusal of, and intended to meet, the strong points of evidence given before the Sadler committee. The use of instruments at childbirth, was frequently named, by the medical witnesses whose practice was confined to factory districts, and no doubt suggested the rather indelicate queries copied by the *Times*. The Factory Commission aimed at accomplishing so much, that it knew the means directly at its command

were inadequate to the proposed ends ; it, consequently, looked for assistance from medical students, and the teachers of medical schools, in the larger cities and towns; also to the secretaries of benefit societies, and others familiar with the condition and practices of the factory population. The central board proceeded upon the assumption that every one would be able and anxious to facilitate the labours of the district commissioners, and that most well-informed persons would be prepared and willing to answer all the questions they were instructed to ask. An assumption without the shadow of a foundation, for those best able to answer the questions suggested were disgusted with the mere name of further inquiry, which they considered unnecessary and vexatious ; the operatives, too, had learned from experience, that to speak the whole truth was to them dangerous.

The appointment of this commission, and the objects of its inquiry, were, to the factory operatives and their friends, decidedly objectionable. They maintained that on all the points of inquiry full evidence had been given, that the object of the government in appointing the commission, was to prepare for the House of Commons only such evidence as would warrant a departure from Mr Sadler's Bill. They also maintained, that under any circumstances, a royal commission ought not to have been appointed—because that every enquiry ought to be open, and the evidence taken subject to cross-examination. A course of proceeding which the appointment of a select committee would have allowed, but that of a royal commission precluded. The weight of the medical evidence before the Sadler committee was so great, and so decisive, as to force either immediate legislation, or an excuse for the delay on the part of the government. Two classes of opponents were anxious for delay. Those who opposed factory legislation, from a sincere conviction of

the truth of certain principles of political economy, felt that the force of facts was against their opinions (or, as they preferred calling them—"principles"); under the operation of "non-interference," so dear to the Benthamites, there existed, on the authority of the Sadler report, the greatest misery; they, consequently, sued for delay, in the hope that the result, in the shape of a report from a royal commission, would be more in accordance with "the greatest happiness" theory. True, there were, among the Benthamites, those who reasoned to the effect that the balance of riches was more than an equivalent for the misery endured, that the factory system was on the whole beneficial, and if allowed to work out its own destiny, would be to England an enduring blessing. Such reasoning, however, was not appreciated by the hearers at anything like the value claimed for it on the part of the professors; they, therefore, urged delay and inquiry. Those who opposed factory legislation from a conviction that their capital and profits would be thereby endangered, were clamorous for inquiry. They had forced on Mr Sadler the appointment of a select committee, under the pledge that they would disprove the statements contained in his speech; they now raised a cry, that the evidence given before the committee was one-sided, and, that the true state of those employed in factories could not be ascertained by the personal inquiry of commissioners. The operatives and their friends viewed the commission as an unnecessary and hostile proceeding, and resolved on opposition. The policy of the supporters of factory regulation will be best understood by some examples of their proceedings.

The following document represented the feelings of the factory operatives on the factory commission, it also illustrates the use they made of the evidence given before the Sadler committee:—

"The ADDRESS of the operatives of England and Scotland, to all ranks and classes of the land.

"Fellow Countrymen—We appeal to you on behalf of the Ten Hours Bill, now before the House of Commons, and under Lord Ashley's care. Whatever may be the manifold causes of national distress, and of that poverty, in most cases, or that profligacy in some, which induces parents to submit their offspring to such ruinous toil, and whatever remedies it may be considered proper to apply, still, in the name of justice, let the law of England protect children without further delay from lawless and heartless avarice. We, who now address you, are operatives ourselves; we have heard and read discussion upon discussion on this humane and righteous measure, and after calm and deliberate reflection, we unanimously conclude that, it will be favourable to commerce in general, to the honest master, and the industrious man, and to the moral and political health of society. At this moment we are called upon by the unjust and mercenary influence of the mill-owners in Parliament, to submit the case of the factory child to the investigation of a commission. Eighteen hundred pages of evidence have been collected from masters and men, the medical and clerical profession, and especially from the poor hapless victims of this cruel, money-getting system. But this suffices not. By a table appended to the evidence before the select committee, it is demonstrated, that more have died before their twentieth year, where the factory system extensively prevails, than have died at their fortieth year elsewhere. But this suffices not. Insatiable as death, the rich oppressor still asserts his right, to add to his blood-guilty store, by working the British Infant beyond the time of the soldier, the farmer, nay the adult felon, and the more fortunate child of British colonial slavery.

"Fellow countrymen—This sort of oppression is not confined to our own generation, or our own country. It has

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been attributed to the corn laws : but when this system was yet in its infancy, and no corn law existed, the hours of labour exacted from children, were as bad or worse than now. It has been traced to taxation, which we feel to bear heavily and most unequally upon us. But in America, this, at all events, is not the cause of over-labour in factories, and there they work children in many cases longer than we do here. In fact, it is avarice which is the root of the evil—avarice which has not been content to supplant human labour by machinery, but now asserts, with bloody arrogance, its right to grind to the dust the helpless child, which it has obliged to take her father's place. Will you stand by and view this with cool indifference ? Will you not unite your energies with ours, to protect the weak against the strong, and the indigent against the rich oppressor ? See your country languishing—drooping its head under the chilly blasts of political economy—of grasping monopolies—of heartless calculation, which have blighted its fairest prospect. We know our agricultural brethren are sufferers from its horrid and pestilential breath as well as ourselves. The Ten Hours Bill is a sample in legislation favourable to us all. Sadler, than whom no man has been more beloved or hated, has stood like another Aaron between the dead and the living, with the fragrant incense of justice and benevolence in his hand, to stay the plague of political economy and all-engrossing covetousness. His senatorial mantle has fallen on a noble and illustrious successor, who fears God and regards man, but defies the scorn of the proud.

"Let Lord Ashley's name be dear to Britain's honest labourers and oppressed factory children. Let his factory bill have your support. Our request is that you will use every lawful and constitutional means to promote its legislative adoption this session. Give them no rest—pour out your petitions for us and our children at the foot of the throne, and into both Houses of Parliament. Protest, as we do,

against the mill-owners' commission. We will not, except by legal obligation, try our cause before it. We challenge such a jury, appointed as it is by those who have been arraigned at the bar of their country to try their own cause, or rather to cover their guilt from public view. Our gracious sovereign has been imposed upon; we acknowledge and revere his Majesty's authority, but we condemn unmeasurably the act of his advisers. Is it thus that justice can be attained, when the cause of the poor is tried in open court, and that of the rich in the secret chambers of guilt? We leave our cause in your hands, and implore our fellow-countrymen of every rank, to petition without delay for the Ten Hours Bill, and that it may be passed without reference to a partial, unjust, unnecessary, and delusive parliamentary commission, sued out on false pretences, to the abuse of his Majesty's royal prerogative, and to the hurt and grief of his loving and loyal subjects.

"We address you as those who revere the constitution of our country. We honour the King—we respect the House of Commons; but we firmly believe that in the matter to which our present appeal refers, the influence of the interested and heartless mill-owners has misled the House of Commons, who were induced, by gross misrepresentation, to sanction the Commission by a majority of one!

"Surely so important a question, decided only by a majority of one, might have caused his Majesty's confidential advisers to pause.

"We believe his gracious Majesty has been imposed upon; and we have ventured to represent the same to our sovereign. We therefore protest—not against the exercise of his Majesty's royal prerogative, nor the authority of parliament—but we protest against the sordid influence by which both the one and the other have been so grossly imposed upon; and which influence seeks to rivet upon us and our children the chains of factory bondage.

"Signed on behalf of the operatives of England and Scotland, in the manufacturing districts,

"GEO. HIGGINBOTTOM, Chairman.

"Manchester, April 25, 1833."

When the Commissioners arrived in Manchester, there was handed to them, as had been arranged a fortnight before, at a general meeting of factory delegates, the following protest :—

"To the Commissioners appointed by the House to inquire into the condition and sufferings of the Factory Labourers.

"Gentlemen,—We, the undersigned, acting under the direction, and on behalf of the great body of factory labourers, in the town of Manchester, beg leave to present this our respectful remonstrance. First, however, we would declare our unfeigned loyalty and attachment to the King and constitution as by law established ; next, we would express our no less sincere respect for yourselves, as well as for the authority under which you appear amongst us. Having premised thus much, we make bold to declare our unconquerable aversion to, and suspicion of, the effects of any inquiry so instituted; and our reasons are these which follow :—The evidence obtained before the committee on Mr Sadler's bill, was called for on the suggestion of those factory masters, and their friends and dependants, who have avowed their heedlessness of the waste of infant life and strength, and the degradation in every way of the factory population, when put in competition with the profits of capital invested in steam mills. That evidence is now admitted, by the intelligent part of the public, to be conclusive proof of the fact that the factory system, as at present worked, does tend to deprave and degrade the labourers employed in it; and, what is our most especial cause of grief and despair, that it shuts out infancy from

any chance of human instruction, dwarfs their bodies, twists and bends their tender bones, and deforms their figures. The numerical statements of deaths, deformities, and disease, furnished to parliament, leave no room for doubt upon these heads. That evidence taken before a competent and ordinary court of inquiry, is violently and without reason put aside, to make way for a mode of inquiry chosen by those whose interests are openly opposed to the physical and moral well-being of the factory labourers; and those very parties, as we perceive by the series of questions issued to them, are, in their own counting-houses, without the responsibility of an oath, or the restraint which would be imposed by a face-to-face examination, and the chance of a cross-examination, to give such answers as they think fit, which answers, as we cannot but suppose, are to be placed in opposition to the unanswerable body of evidence alluded to above. On the other hand, what are the labourers to do? Past experience has proved to them that there is no danger more directly threatening the very means of their existence than giving evidence of the facts as they exist. The minds of the masters must have undergone a complete revolution, if any such attempt on the part of the labourers will not only cause the loss of their places, but also the posting of their names in the entrance-hall of every mill far and near, for the purpose of insuring their exclusion from any such employment in any other place. For these reasons,—because the mode of inquiry is useless, its effects inevitably partial, its course unusual and unsatisfactory to the ends of justice; and one side of the evidence cut off by intimidation, expressed or implied, and in any case not to be given with impunity. We respectfully take leave to protest against any proceedings which may be taken in the course of your inquiries being used as counter-evidence to that taken before the committee on Mr Sadler's bill."

The operatives by this protest had debarred themselves from giving evidence; it was resolved, notwithstanding, to give the commissioners an external view of the actual appearance of factory-workers. On Saturday, the 4th of May, 1833, the children engaged in the factories met on the field, called Peterloo,—unhappily memorable from the collision between the yeoman cavalry and the supporters of Mr Henry Hunt, in 1819. Here the children formed into a procession, having their usual banners. On these were the names of Sadler, Oastler, Bull, Fielden, and Ashley. Some banners had mottoes such as "A muzzle for the steam giant" —"Manufactures without child-slaying, &c." On reaching the York Hotel, in which the commissioners occupied apartments, a deputy from the children presented the following memorial :—

"To the Commissioners appointed by the King to inquire into the state of Factory Labour.

"Gentlemen,—We, children employed in the factories of Manchester, beg leave to present to you this our humble and respectful memorial. We implore your pity and compassion for our sufferings, for the great weight of labour thrown on our young limbs,—for the long duration of that labour daily, mostly in the close air of a heated room,—for the weakness it brings upon us while we are little, and the sickness and deformity which fall upon many of us,—for the overwhelming fatigue which benumbs our senses, and for the shutting out of any chance of learning to read and write like children of our age in other employments.

"We respect our masters, and are willing to work for our support, and that of our parents and brothers and sisters; but we want time for more rest, a little play, and to learn to read and write. Young as we are, we find that we could do our work better if we were to work less time, and were not so weighed down by the long continuance of our daily toil.

"We do not think it right that we should know nothing but work and suffering, from Monday morning to Saturday night, to make others rich.

"Do, good gentlemen, inquire carefully into our condition. Let not a respect for wealth disguise from your view our severe wrongs, nor restrain you from declaring what measure of justice is due to us. Indeed, we tell you no lies, when, we say that our bodies are wasted, and our strength sinking, under our daily tasks; and that we are without any time for amusement or learning. Surely the King does not intend that his youngest subjects should be worked the hardest, and suffer the most. We throw ourselves upon your mercy and justice. Look at us, and say if it is possible that we can be disbelieved! Do your duty faithfully to us. Tell the King the actual state in which you find us. So shall you cause relief to come from our rulers; and you will be repaid by good wishes from the grateful hearts of thousands of little children like ourselves."

At Bradford, the indignation of the operatives against the commissioners was intense. The evidence given before the Sadler committee was known to be correct, and further enquiry was considered to be an insult; the commissioners, however, had ample means afforded them to judge of the evil effects of unregulated factory labour. Hundreds of factory-made cripples were exhibited before them,—they had thus ocular corroboration of the truth of that evidence, the weight of which on the mind of parliament and the country they, it was popularly assumed, had been appointed to destroy.

The following account of the proceedings at Leeds, is copied from a pamphlet published at the time to which it refers; it is a strictly correct narrative.—"Great Meeting in Leeds, on Thursday, the 16th of May, 1833, of the factory children. The commissioners appointed to report from this district arrived at Leeds on Monday, the 13th inst.

So soon as their arrival was announced, the Short-Time Committee assembled, and at seven o'clock, accompanied by about 1,000 operatives, proceeded to deliver the protest of the committee to the commissioners ; describing the object of their visit as an expensive plot to delay the passing of the great measure introduced into parliament by M. T. Sadler, Esq., and now advocated therein by Lord Ashley. On the Wednesday evening, however, their retreat was discovered, and considerable numbers assembled in front of the hotel. On Thursday the excitement was very great, as it was publicly announced that on the evening the factory children would assemble at seven o'clock in the Free Market, and proceed from thence to the hotel, to present their protest against the visit of the commissioners."

An eye-witness of the proceedings writes as follows :—

"During the whole of the day, boys were coming to the Union Inn, head-quarters of the Short-time Committee, from the different flax and woollen mills, for slips to bind round their hats, having printed thereon 'The Ten Hours Bill.' From the feeling which they manifested in favour of that measure, it appeared unnecessary for the committee to incur much expense, or make any extraordinary efforts to collect the children together. No band was engaged, and only two flags taken out, one of which was the famous one representing the scene in Water Lane (Marshall's Mills) at five o'clock in the morning, as it was thought prudent not to make much display, lest the children should be injured by the pressure of the crowd. At half-past seven the committee, &c., repaired to the Free Market, but soon after their arrival the meeting became so dense, that it was considered dangerous to keep the children long in that situation ; therefore Mr Cavie Richardson, whom the children had applied to, read their protest, to which they gave their assent by three cheers, and then proceeded to Scarborough's Hotel with an immense multitude, when six of the poor

children, headed by Mr Richardson and other friends of the Ten Hours Bill, were introduced to the commissioners.

"Mr Richardson then advanced a few paces towards the commission, and delivered an address."

The commissioners listened to Mr Richardson with great attention, when that gentleman delivered into their hands the following protest of the children:—

"To the Commissioners appointed by the King to inquire into the state of Factory labour.

"Gentlemen,—We, children employed in the mills and factories of Leeds, feeling the intolerable burdens which are heaped upon us, and the manifold sufferings to which we are unfortunately subjected, cannot but express our anxiety to be delivered from those grievances which we are unhappily compelled to endure. We have rejoiced, and still rejoice, that our situation has attracted the attention of thousands and tens of thousands of kind-hearted individuals —of men who have hearts to feel for the defenceless victims of avarice. And we are glad to find that those who thus pity our hapless condition, are men who are determined to battle our enemies until victory is obtained, and our deliverance is complete. But these feelings of joy and gladness which have been created in our minds by the prospect of a speedy termination of our misery, have been greatly marred on learning that a commission of inquiry had been appointed to gratify our task-masters. The object of which commission we verily believe to be not to obtain correct information, but to clear our guilty tyrants from those charges which are founded on the most undeniable evidence, of the truth of which we ourselves can bear testimony. We are confident of its being unnecessary to give further evidence of the evils of the system under which we suffer; and, further, we know that should we declare the real nature of the treatment which we endure, and the dangers to which we are constantly exposed, our employers would not only dismiss us, but continue to display their base tyranny, by

hunting us from place to place, and depriving us of every possibility of procuring an honest livelihood.

"But we are, moreover, given to understand that you have refused all inquiry in a fair and open manner, while, at the same time, you have been in secret with our masters, from which conduct we see that your object is not to do justice, or faithfully to search into the situation in which we are placed.

"Under such circumstances we protest against this commission, as being founded in injustice, inhumanity, and fraud, and as carrying with it consequences the most fatal to the interests and well-being, not only of us, but of society in general, except it be those who seek to continue slavery and its attendant evils, that they may riot in plenty and pride at the expense of the sweat, the blood, and the life of toil-worn childhood and insulted poverty.

"And, while we thus protest against the commission, we must say to you individually, 'Better would it have been had a millstone been tied about your necks and ye cast into the depths of the sea, rather than have been appointed to dishonour God, and wound the objects of his care, by offending one of the little ones.'

"At this stage of the proceedings never surely was so interesting an exhibition witnessed: not less than 3,000 ragged, wretched little ones, attended by at least 15,000 spectators. The commissioners had a full opportunity offered them of witnessing the disgusting effects of slavery in factories, and an unanswerable argument that employment, such as their dress and dirt exhibited they had been engaged in, ought not to be prolonged to longer hours than the felon is condemned or the black slave constrained to labour." The children retired, singing in unison their factory song:

"We will have the Ten Hours Bill,
That we will—that we will;
Or the land shall ne'er be still,
We will have the Ten Hours Bill."

After the presentation of the address an important conversation followed between Mr Oastler and Mr Drinkwater, one of the commissioners. "Mr Commissioner Drinkwater expressed his great regret that any objection should exist in furnishing the commission with every information sought for, and was replied to by Mr Oastler, that the country possessed every evidence it was possible to require, and that the proceedings originated out of the minds of the enemies of the bill. Mr Drinkwater rejoined that they bore the King's commission, and it was, therefore, incorrect to say it proceeded from the enemies of the bill. Mr Oastler then observed, we know all that very well—we know the ministers sent you, and we know that Lord Althorp is our enemy—that he has declared that to pass the bill will ruin the country, and that you have constant communication with, and all things are submitted to, the millowners, before they meet the public eye. Mr Drinkwater then assured Mr Oastler that their only object was to ascertain the truth. Mr Oastler observed, then your object has already been obtained, and any old washerwoman could tell you that ten hours a day was too long for any child to labour.

Mr Drinkwater then again pressed Mr Oastler to assist in getting information. Mr Oastler said, in his individual capacity he should give none, and asked if the commissioners were ready to indemnify such of the operatives and their families as would give evidence, as many of them had lost their employment in consequence of giving evidence before the committee of the House of Commons. Mr Drinkwater admitted that "this was a point of great importance to be got over." Mr Oastler added—"As the King's commissioners, unauthorised by the legislature, I do not recognise your authority, on the contrary, I protest against it, and I believe that the ministers are attempting to exercise a power which the constitution of England does not warrant; but if you will divest yourself of your assumed authority, and meet

me in the capacity of private gentlemen, I will most willingly tell you all that I know, and put you into the way of obtaining the fullest possible information of all that is going on in the factories ; but as an Englishman, knowing my constitutional privileges, I cannot be a party to the violation, even in the most remote degree, of any principle of the British constitution." The commissioners declined to accept Mr Oastler's offer.

A protracted correspondence took place between Mr Sadler and the commissioners as to the mode of taking evidence. Mr Sadler desired that the examination of witnesses should be conducted openly, and their evidence reported fully, conditions to which the commissioners did not assent. This correspondence was conducted with eminent ability on both sides. The feelings which guided Mr Sadler in his conduct towards the factory commissioners may be apprehended by the perusal of the following passage of one of his letters, addressed to Messrs Drinkwater and Power, factory commissioners:—"I expressed, in my last address to you, my apprehension that an eleven hours bill might be attempted as the result of this inquiry ; if, however, the enemies of the measure are driven from that project, they are not without other expedients, in pressing which they will not fail to represent themselves as the best friends of those, the amelioration of whose condition they have constantly opposed. Another and a very favourite plan of certain opposing millowners, and one which was proposed to myself, will, perhaps, be next suggested, namely, to carry the protection required only to a certain age—say, twelve or fourteen years, which regulation it is calculated would well enough suit the purposes of certain employers, as in some pursuits, the very little living machines it is found are hardly so profitable to work as the rather bigger ones. Hence the very same people who could not determine, in thirty years' time, that fifteen hours labour and confinement daily, in a cotton

or flax mill, was at all injurious (rather the contrary), will all at once outbid the oldest and most zealous friends of the factory children, at the period of life which best suits the purpose, to the tender mercies of their unmitigated system, deprived of the nation's sympathies, and, consequently, without either relief or hope; the age in question being, nevertheless, that of their rapid physical development, when if the slightest reliance can be placed upon the unanimous opinion of the heads of the medical profession, the human constitution, and especially that of the female, demands the greatest care and attention, and when excessive labour and cruel treatment would be the most seriously injurious. Recommend, gentlemen, as strongly as you please, the remission of the hours of labour in early childhood, propose eight, six, or four hours if you see good, and let that portion of the press (thank God it is but a miserable part of that mighty engine, which has done so nobly in this righteous cause), which but a very short time ago could see no evil in working children eleven hours a day, now suddenly turn round and plead for six or eight only; thus, though varying the means, still steadily and consistently labouring to serve the same end, the cause of the *prominently interested!* But still *we* shall continue to demand that the young and rising generation beyond that age, shall not be required to labour longer than the adult artizan consents, or the felon and the slave is compelled to toil; in short, that no manufacturer shall be permitted to do what I rejoice to think what many of them would shudder to contemplate,—work the children of the poor of any age, or of either sex, to death. That constant and sufficient protection which selfishness itself affords to the labouring animals during the period of their growth, humanity will surely not deny to the unprotected youth of the country. The Ten Hours' Bill is, I repeat, at the very best, a twelve hours' bill, including necessary refreshment; and an act

that would consign the tender youth of the country to thirteen or fourteen hours of labour and confinement would, to all intents and purposes, be the opposing millowners', and not the operatives' bill; and I think it would be hardly proper to take lessons of humanity at least on this subject, and on this occasion, from their school. Certain of your instructions, I see, indicate the idea of a system of infant 'relays.' Relays! The very term is disgusting; the comparison between the management of human creatures and that of cattle is, as Hume says, 'shocking!' But even in any such comparison, the physical condition of the infantile labourer, under the 'relay' system, would sink infinitely below that of the brute. Besides, were such a plan even proper or practicable in itself, it would open a door to those perpetual and cruel evasions of the law, whether on the part of masters or of parents, against which no enactment could effectually guard; so that the 'last state' of the poor factory child would be 'worse than the first.' Lastly, a bill founded on any such principle would operate practically as the heaviest curse upon the adults, who would then have to work against two or more 'relays,' rendering their condition absolutely intolerable." In the course of this correspondence the commissioners expressed themselves in not very respectful terms regarding Mr Oastler, a circumstance which he turned to good account, at the various public meetings, which he attended on the factory question. The task which the factory commissioners had undertaken was the most difficult possible. The government were determined that the commission should report, the Ten Hours' bill committee had declared war against the commission, they were therefore opposed with a most obstinate and determinate spirit, they were watched morn, noon, and night, and every available obstacle raised against them. There is a latent feeling in the minds of Englishmen against royal commissions and commissioners, there is a pre-dis-

position to treat them as the agencies of despotism. This state of mind was strengthened because of the same persons, in some cases, having been appointed factory commissioners who had, previously, been employed on the Poor-law commission. The grounds of opposition against the factory commissioners were twofold—first, a general feeling against royal commissions, a feeling which was traditional and considered patriotic and constitutional; second, a decided conviction that the factory commissioners had favourable opinions of the millowners, and were appointed to report in their favour. This second ground of objection was increased in force by the commissioners having partaken frequently of the hospitality of mill-owners opposed to factory legislation. A circumstance which, in the then excited state of the factory districts, gave potency to the current belief among the operatives, that the commissioners were unfriendly towards them, and favourable towards their employers.

The report of the commission of inquiry was laid on the table of the House of Commons on the 28th of June, 1833. It corroborated the evidence given before the Sadler committee in all its principal features; it was impossible that any credible report could do otherwise, so decided and universal was the evidence against the unregulated factory system. The commissioners declared:—

"From the whole of the evidence laid before us, of which we have thus endeavoured to exhibit the material points, we find:—

"1st. That the children employed in all the principal branches of manufacture throughout the kingdom, work during the same number of hours as the adults.

"2nd. That the effects of labour during such hours are, in a great number of cases, permanent deterioration of the physical constitution; the production of disease wholly irremediable; and the partial or entire exclusion (by reason

of excessive fatigue) from the means of obtaining adequate education and acquiring useful habits, or of profiting by those means when afforded.

"3rd. That at the age when children suffer these injuries from the labour they undergo, they are not free agents, but are let out to hire, the wages they earn being received and appropriated by their parents and guardians.

"We are therefore of opinion that a case is made out for the interference of the legislature in behalf of the children employed in factories."

Among the most resolute, and because of his superior intellect and knowledge, one of the most powerful opponents of the factory commission was the late George Condy, Esq., of Manchester. Mr Condy was in all senses a remarkable man; we conceive it to be consistent with our duty to take note of the more prominent points of his life and character. By his own industry and talent, in the capacity of a reporter for the *Times*, George Condy had been enabled to obtain the requisite knowledge for and to be called to the bar (in this respect resembling the late amiable and much-regretted Mr Justice Talfourd). The influence of his connection with the London press on his own mind was very marked and distinct; it taught him to take enlarged views of public measures. Few barristers apprehended more thoroughly the principles of the English law; his knowledge was not that of a skilful attorney initiated into the secrets of sharp practice; his rule was to consider the spirit of the laws, and to frame his judgment in accordance therewith. This habit often led him to adopt and express opinions which to others appeared novel and startling, but which, on examination, were frequently discovered to be old and constitutional; his literary productions were numerous and spread over a wide surface, in the columns of newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets. He was for some time editor and joint proprietor of the *Manchester Advertiser*. His writings are remarkable for

terseness, vigour, boldness, and a dry sarcastic humour, which justifies the belief that his copy of Dean Swift's works was frequently read. The following brief extracts from letters addressed to Mr Oastler by Mr Condy, contain a glimpse of his creed on questions of social and political interest, and show the inner impulses which moved him to action :—

"My dear Oastler,—Your letter had the effect of a thunderbolt upon my ruminations. To such conclusions do we all come by attending to the wants and miseries of the multitude: yet, what is to be done by any man who knows the evil, loves the right, and has too good a conscience to keep silence? It is certainly more fortunate in regard to personal interests not to possess any such discernment. But I must believe that the impulses of a generous and feeling mind are imparted by a great moral power which puts upon us the sacrifice whether we will or not. It is an everlasting necessity to do the bidding of the Father of the universe. I am certain, from my own love of ease and books, that I have been roused and stimulated by no other force to take upon myself the trouble and obloquy, the loss of friends and professional profits—both necessary to my narrow means of existence, which have been my fate for the last five years. All this, if I did not foresee, I distinctly apprehended, or past experience would have been lost upon me Now for more general subjects, on which I feel it pleasant to unfold my mind to you. I agree with you in all your views, except the political union of the church with the state. Upon that point I am heterodox—or, rather, I am for pure orthodoxy. I hold the older doctrine that the Church should govern herself, as she is supposed to do by the very principle of her constitution, and as she did from the time of the apostles until the first act of English supremacy. But I will not dispute with you upon this point, when we agree upon some that are among the most essential.

"The winds of political controversy and change at present blow bleakly upon your clients, the labourers. The nation is infected with a monstrous, a portentous greediness of gain, which it seeks at the cost of the hunger and sufferings of the industrious classes. This leads to the wasting of the nation's resources, in seeking to check misery and crime, and all kinds of mad expedients are on trial to qualify industry to live without bread. Can anything in Old Testament history and prophecy equal the blindness of statesmen who uphold and propagate a system which costs more in military, police, criminal justice, punishment, and pauper management than the wages divided among all the manufacturing labourers. 'Take note, my son, how little wisdom serves to govern mankind.' The dying chancellor who spoke this left half the subject veiled. Take note, he should have added, what havoc wealth and power make of the bodies and necessary provision of the poor, and how cunningly they contrive to miss the secret even in hunting their darling riches. Queen Elizabeth reckoned her state rich in proportion to the abundance enjoyed by her people. Her whole reign, and especially her astonishing independence in money affairs, gave that maxim a glorious illustration. Could any man who lived to the close of it have believed that we should live to see a state of society seeking to found itself in permanent security by reducing the labour of the country to the lowest possible pittance? And yet it is a horrible truth, which is enough to inspire another anti-Babylon prophet, that all the upper ranks in this country are infected with that belief, and that the laws are rapidly forming themselves into an entire conformity with it. Witness the detestable Poor Laws Act, which, against all sense of honour, manhood, justice, or common honesty, puts a premium upon the pursuit of male lust, at the cost and suffering of the other sex. What is there in the older superstitions more filthy than a statute which takes off the bridle upon mas-

culine lust and fits it with a new coil upon the female and her relations? I am tempted to believe in the transmigration of souls, and that the villain who contrived this is he between whom and the woman there is put inseparable enmity, by effect of the primary curse." The writer of these plainly-expressed opinions rendered important services to the factory movement, and never more conspicuously than in publishing two pamphlets in 1833. The first intended to prove the constitutional illegality of the proceedings of the factory commission; the second "An Argument for placing Factory Children within the pale of the Law." As a piece of controversial writing, the last has been seldom equalled; it may now be read with profit and advantage. The publication of this pamphlet increased its author's reputation among the highest legal authorities; it was then, and long after, a text-book among the advocates of the short-time question. As a public speaker, Mr Condy's success was more a triumph of wit, sarcasm, humour, and ridicule, than of facts and argument. Those who were favoured with Mr Condy's society "in the social hour," will not, in fitting moments, fail to recall past scenes with delight. He was gifted with rare powers of conversation, "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy;" his satire could pierce without seeming to be intended to wound: in the overflowing of his wit, without effort, it was his habit to "set the table in a roar." These wonderful exhibitions of wit, fancy, and intellectual power were never enjoyed more thoroughly than within the hospitable home of Mr Oastler, at Fixby Hall. As the struggle of years began to ripen into prosperity, this gifted man died in the very meridian of life, having enjoyed for a brief period the income of a Commissioner of Bankruptcy in the borough of Manchester. The factory children have had few supporters of their cause more richly endowed, or more disinterested and sincere, than was the late George Condy.

CHAPTER III.

PARLIAMENTARY EFFORTS TO OBTAIN A TEN HOURS' ACT IN 1833.—DIFFERENCE OF OPINION AS TO PENAL LEGISLATION.—GREAT MEETING AT WIBSEY LOW MOOR, IN FAVOUR OF THE PERSONAL PUNISHMENT OF HARDENED OFFENDERS AGAINST THE LAW.—PASSING OF THE GOVERNMENT FACTORIES' ACT, FOUNDED ON THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

One of the prominent mistakes of modern statesmen has been to devote their attention to things rather than to human beings,—hence the popular belief that cheapness must be nationally advantageous. The interest of the consumer seems at first sight to be inseparable from cheapness, but the closest investigation will show that cheapness, the result of long hours of labour and low wages, is invariably injurious to the labouring portions of a community; the happiness and comfort of these is a subject of infinitely greater moment than the merely aggregated mass of material products offered for sale at low prices in home and foreign markets. The supporters of factory regulation had the honourable merit of beginning with the consideration of human beings; there was, therefore, between them and their opponents an impassable gulf. True, the avowed end of both was the same, namely, the improvement of *all*, but the means leading to the end were opposed: the free school of economists said—"All interference is wrong, get cheapness, and whatever else is

needful will follow in its train." The supporters of factory regulation said—"Check excessive and unnatural labour, care for health and morals, and whatever else is needful will follow in their train." In the discussion of the question between the opposing parties, which naturally took a wide range, a good deal of personal feeling was manifested. The weight of facts had been so decidedly in favour of the supporters of factory regulation, that the government was obliged to take sides. On June the 17th, 1833, Mr Sadler's bill, as amended by Lord Ashley, was read a second time in the House of Commons. The amended bill limited the hours of labour for women and young persons to ten per day, and contained a clause intended to secure personal punishment for the third offence in violation of the projected law, which, with a clause requiring a surgeon's certificate as to the age of children, were very offensive to the millowners, but very popular with the operatives. It was foreseen that this clause would be met by an organised and determined opposition by the millowners, and their friends, opposed to factory legislation; in order to strengthen the hands of Lord Ashley, public meetings were held in the principal manufacturing towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and also an aggregate meeting in the West Riding, at which meeting "the personal punishment clause" formed the principal subject of discussion, and was universally adopted. Those among the millowners opposed to all regulation, when they found some measure of regulation inevitable, naturally desired that it should be as limited and loose as their opposition, in and out of parliament, could make it. The operatives, on the other hand, were desirous that the law should be binding and restrictive. They watched every step in the proceedings of parliament with intense interest, and were resolutely resolved on having the Ten Hours' Bill, with the personal punish-

ment clause included. Experience has convinced most observers that it is easier to plant an idea in the mind than to eradicate it. The political atmosphere of the House of Commons, and of the factory districts of the north, were very different; in the first, questions were looked at by many very much with the feeling with which a servant regards an unpleasant but indispensable duty; by the last, enthusiasm and resolution forced the mind onward, obstacles were either unseen or disregarded. The recently awakened intelligence of the operative classes was rigorous and energetic, it longed for a practical realization of its own power.

Lord Ashley, Mr Sadler and Mr Wood, in their anxiety to conciliate opposition, and in the expectation of gaining a few doubtful votes, had resolved to abandon the certificate and personal punishment clauses, in the hope of securing the acknowledgment by the House of Commons of the Ten Hours' limitation clause. Beyond all doubt, the thought of personal punishment was very odious and repulsive to the minds of the mill-owners, the very naming of "the House of Correction" was felt by them to be a degradation, it was very decided evidence on the part of the operatives and their supporters, of distrust in the honour of their opponents. The operatives knew from experience that fines to almost any amount could be levied in the factories, and they contemplated the probability of offenders against the law indemnifying themselves out of the earnings of those they employed in overtime; they also knew that money and the means of association were at the command of the factory owners; the operatives conceived the possibility of a wealthy millowner opposed to factory legislation, and not troubled with conscientious scruples about the sacredness of law, indulging in the cheap amusement of breaking the law, when convenient, and paying from the profits of his crime, the pecuniary fines imposed. Lord Ashley had

by his written authority approved of personal punishment. His lordship, Mr Sadler, and Mr Wood, were not on principle opposed to Mr Oastler and Mr Bull, the question was one of time and degree; certainly Mr Oastler and Mr Bull were in no humour for concessions, and they had at their command the hearts and hands of the operatives of the north. Of all social and political movements on record, none has equalled in unanimity and energy the factory movement when in the strength of its vigour. Mr Oastler, its founder and apostle, had been, in the House of Commons, by Mr Gisborne, somewhat sneeringly, likened to "Peter the Hermit," certainly Peter never preached up the crusades more effectually than did Mr Oastler the claims of his juvenile clients. Not any words at our command can convey an adequate sense of the state of popular feeling at the time referred to. It is just possible that the principal actors in the stirring scenes of these times were they now to read their own speeches, as then reported, would do so with astonishment. Mr Oastler issued a placard which was marked by the impress of what was then called "the royal style,"—a bold and striking address intended to arouse the working men of Yorkshire to a sense of their duty. The sensation caused thereby was immense, and it contributed in a marked manner to give importance to the occasion. Mr Stocks, of Huddersfield, Mr Lawrence Pitkethly, and Mr John Leech, were exceedingly active—as they indeed always were in the interests of the factory movement. All the short-time committees were animated by a kindred spirit, and all worked harmoniously together for the same end, each seemed to feel that nothing was done while anything remained to be done. It was this spirit of self-sacrifice that animated and enabled numerous bodies of working men, as well as their representatives, which gave unity and power to the factory movement, a striking result of which was the Wibsey Low

Moor meeting. The importance of this remarkable gathering was undeniable. The ground on which the meeting was held stands high, and commands a splendid prospect from the Craven hills on the one hand, to the peak of Derbyshire on the other. Certainly one of the finest sites for such an assemblage in Yorkshire. So far as scientific knowledge could settle the question of the due limit of labour in factories, the medical evidence before the Sadler committee was decisive; the county meeting at York, and the West Riding meeting on Wibsey Low Moor, so far as popular feeling and stern resolution were concerned, were not less so. A summary of the proceedings of the latter will convey a knowledge of the facts of the factory movement as they then existed, and illustrate the nature of the out-of-doors agitation which forced attention from even the most indifferent of statesmen. Mr Oastler and his supporters based their approval of personal punishment for a third breach of the law, on the principle—"that wilful crime against the person should be punished in the person of the offender," a proposition, the justice of which, under the circumstances suggested, cannot easily be shaken. It is assuredly not to the credit of Roman jurisprudence, that Gibbon recorded: "Veratius ran through the streets striking on the face the inoffensive passengers, and his attendant purse-bearer immediately silenced their clamours by the legal tender of twenty-five pieces of copper." Honour is due to those who neutralized so gross an outrage on justice and equity. Punishment for crime is mainly defensible, as a precaution against future offences, and ought to be of that kind and degree most likely to produce the result desired.

The numbers present at the Wibsey Low Moor meeting, were estimated by the chairman at not fewer than 120,000 persons. They arrived on the ground in divisions from the different surrounding districts, headed by leaders, each

division had banners and bands of music, all occupied their previously allotted places with perfect order. Among the inscriptions on banners were the following : " Sadler and the abolition of slavery at home and abroad." " No child-murder." " Proverbs, 6 c. 16 v.—These things doth the Lord hate, a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood." " Yorkshire expects every man to do his duty, to the poor factory child." " Muzzle the monster steam." " To your tents, O Israel, it is better to die by the sword than hunger." On some of the flags were painted emblematic devices. One of these represented the good Samaritan staunching the wounds of a poor man ; another exhibited an overlooker strapping a child into a factory at ten minutes past five in the morning; a third was the scene of a poor mother leading her children through the snow to a mill in the morning; another, a coat of arms; on a shield was painted a billy-roller, a time clock, a book of fines, a screw key, and a knotted strap, the whole supported by two factory cripples; the crest portrayed an infant entwined by a serpent, which was represented as about to dart its poison into the mouth of its victim. These mottoes and emblems were the reflex of the feelings and thoughts of their bearers. The meeting was presided over by Captain Wood, of Sandal, and the speakers were Mr Oastler, Mr Bull, Mr William Stocks, chief constable of Huddersfield, Mr Busfield (Ferrand), Mr John Ayrey, of Leeds, Mr Bedford, of Keighley, Mr George Condy, of Manchester, Mr Lawrence Pitkethly, of Huddersfield, and Mr Richardson, of Leeds.

The proceedings throughout were of the most animated kind, and occupied five-and-a-half hours, Mr Oastler and Mr Doherty (the last named gentleman had been specially deputed by Lord Ashley, Mr Sadler, and Mr Wood to represent their views, and for that purpose had come down from London,) debated with much earnestness on the propriety of their adopting

a resolution in support of the personal punishment of hardened offenders against factory law, Mr Oastler for, Mr Doherty against its adoption; Mr Doherty was opposed to Mr Oastler only on grounds of expediency. Mr Doherty contended, on behalf of those whom he represented, that the retention in Lord Ashley's bill of the personal punishment clause, would endanger the passing of the Ten Hours' Bill during that session; and that if this clause were withdrawn, and the Ten Hours' Bill should be passed without it, then in the next session of parliament it would be easy to add thereto the imprisonment clause. Mr Oastler asked if Mr Doherty could give to the meeting any valid guarantee that the withdrawal of the imprisonment clause would insure the passing of the ten hours' limitation clause? Mr Doherty was on that point unprepared. Mr Oastler contended that concession to opponents was at all times dangerous, and that the strength of the Ten Hours' Bill movement mainly depended upon a strict adhesion to principle. That the object of that meeting, and the other numerous meetings which had been held on that question, was not to weaken the hands of Lord Ashley, but, on the contrary, to make his lordship so strong, being backed by the united support of the people, that both the government and the millowners might perceive the folly of hoping by any stratagem to resist his just demand as already embodied in his own bill. A resolution embodying Mr Oastler's views in support of the personal punishment clause of Lord Ashley's bill, as originally introduced, was twice put to the meeting; on the first occasion two hands were held up against it, on the second three; on both occasions the number of hands raised in its support was immense, the chairman declared the resolution "all but unanimously carried." A declaration which was followed by "thunders of applause." Mr Oastler was throughout supported by the Rev. G. S. Bull, and all the representatives of the short-

time committees present. The result spoke trumpet-tongued of the state of feeling then existing, as a rule, between the employers and the employed, engaged in factory labour ; the last saw no hope for improvement but through stringent restrictive enactments, supported by severe penal clauses. Mr Oastler, though deeply sympathising with the discontent of his hearers, yet directed their indignation into the channel he thought would ultimately lead to the consummation desired, as expressed in all the resolutions adopted; namely, an efficient Ten Hours' Bill. The moral effect of the Wibsey Low Moor meeting was great throughout the country; it convinced all those who attended to public proceedings that the ardour of the Ten Hours' Bill advocates had not abated, and that, under Mr Oastler's and Mr Bull's counsel, they were opposed to all compromise, no matter by whom suggested.

These proceedings at Yorkshire and Lancashire, originally undertaken at Lord Ashley's own request, were conducted in the most spirited and efficient manner. His lordship's changed opinion proved to him a source of weakness. Not any act of Mr Sadler's life caused him greater regret than his having agreed to the temporary abandonment of the imprisonment clauses ; this regret was often expressed to his friends, Mr Oastler and Mr Bull. The decision of the Wibsey Low Moor meeting did not alter the course latterly adopted by his lordship. The subject was again under the notice of parliament on July the 18th ; when the bill was in committee, Lord Althorp, on behalf of the government, urged strenuously on "the house" the necessity of its rejection, and the adoption, in its stead, of a measure founded on the report of the factory commissioners. The principal features of the government measure were the limitation of the hours of labour to twelve per day, for five days, and nine on Saturday, for all persons above thirteen and under eighteen years of age ; children above nine and under thirteen not to

be employed more than eight hours; in silk-mills, children of thirteen years of age to be allowed to work ten hours a-day.

In the course of the discussion, all the old objections against factory regulation were renewed and answered. Lord Ashley firmly resisted the efforts to change the bill from a Ten Hours' to a Twelve Hours' Bill. The supporters of the government measure contended that the eight hours' labour clause, for children from nine to thirteen, would allow of relays, or in other words, the employment of two sets of children in one day. It was maintained by the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill that the government bill would prove impracticable and unsatisfactory. Lord Ashley asked the questions, "Where were the children to be found in numbers sufficient to render the government bill practicable?" "Was the house prepared to say that a master manufacturer might send his waggon to any part of the country for a load of children, like so many hogs, and bring them away from their natural protectors, to place them, unprotected, among strangers?"

On the amendment, naming eighteen years as the age of those to be worked twelve hours per day, under the law, the house divided—Ayes, 93; noes, 238. Majority for the government, 145. The government was successful. Lord Ashley said: "Having taken up the subject fairly and conscientiously, he found that the noble lord (Althorp) had completely defeated him. He should therefore surrender the bill into the hands of the noble lord, but having taken it up with a view to do good to the classes interested, he would only say into whatever hands it might pass, God prosper it." After this formal retirement on the part of Lord Ashley, the measure was wholly in the hands of the government.

It was finally "enacted, That, from and after the first

day of January, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, it shall not be lawful for any person whatsoever, to employ in any factory or mill, except in mills for the manufacture of silk, any child who shall not have completed his, or her, ninth year. That, from and after the expiration of six months after the passing of this Act, it shall not be lawful for any person whatsoever, to employ, keep, or allow to remain, in any factory, or mill, as aforesaid, for a longer time than forty-eight hours in any one week, nor for a longer time than nine hours in any one day, except as herein provided, any child who shall not have completed his, or her, eleventh year of age, or after the expiration of eighteen months from the passing of this Act, any child who shall not have completed his, or her, twelfth year of age, or after the expiration of thirty months from the passing of this Act, any child who shall have completed his, or her, thirteenth year of age: provided, nevertheless, that in mills for the manufacture of silk, children under the age of thirteen years shall be allowed to work ten hours in any one day."

The Act, therefore, was intended to come into complete operation in 1836. The government claimed great credit to itself for having, in this Act, for the first time, appointed factory inspectors, a class of officers whose official duties were to examine into, and report upon, the condition of those employed in factory labour, and enforce obedience to the law. The reports of these inspectors have often contained most valuable information; they have been unpopular among many millowners; on the whole, they have performed their duties efficiently.

The government act for the regulation of factories was condemned and disowned by all the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill movement in and out of parliament. They affirmed that the act, so far as it could be reduced to practice, would involve the greatest cruelty, and the very worst consequences,

to those whose interest it professed to promote ; that as it only afforded protection to those under fourteen years of age, all young persons above that age were without protection, subject to the possibility of labouring against two sets of those under fourteen ; that the long hours consequent would, during the period of growth, be very irksome and injurious, and would entail consequences most prejudicial to the future health and strength of those so employed. That the law could not be fully reduced to practice was seriously and repeatedly affirmed, also, that the efforts necessary for that end would cause great dissatisfaction ; that even the partial operation of the law would to the adults be a source of grievous suffering and complaint; that the evasions of the law would be frequent, and further legislation inevitable. The government, on the other hand, were quite confident of the success of their measure ; each party pointed to time as the test by which their opinions should be judged. Upon this understanding Lord Ashley resolved to desist from future efforts at legislation, and thus allow the government act a fair trial.

The strength of the government, and the weakness of Lord Ashley in opposition, strikingly illustrate the danger of concession, when made under the hope of thereby acquiring power. It was a saying of Dryden—"Politicians neither love nor hate," a maxim the philosophy of which Lord Ashley had failed to appreciate. Those who asked for concession had not any intention of supporting the Ten Hours' Bill, their object was to weaken his lordship's influence in the north, and ultimately to desert him when he had ceased to be formidable ; they were successful, but the lesson thus taught was not lost on the minds of those who were thoroughly in earnest, and were recognised as the influential leaders of the Ten Hours' Bill movement.

CHAPTER IV.

INFLUENCE OF THE OPERATION OF THE NEW POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT, ON THE CONDITION OF THOSE EMPLOYED IN FACTORIES.—THE MIGRATION SYSTEM.—OPPOSITION THERETO, BY MR OASTLER, MR FIELDEN, MR BULL, AND THE REV. JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS.

It is impossible to apprehend rightly the operation of the government factories act, without a reference to the operation of the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The principle of the poor law known as the 43rd of Elizabeth, was the localization of population, localization of authority in the management of the poor. The principle of the new poor law was centralization in the fullest meaning of that word, the controlling power being vested in three commissioners who practically, under the provisions of the New Poor Law Amendment Act, governed the poor of England. These commissioners had large discretionary powers, so much so, indeed, that they, with the sanction of one minister of the Crown, legislated for the poor as well as administered the act of parliament. The leading difference between the principle of the old and the new poor law was this,—under the old poor law the right to live in England, and while able and willing to labour, to be supported in comfort, at home, was granted under the constitution. By the same authority the right to a maintenance was secured under every possible affliction to which life was subjected, and that too in priority of

all other claims. This right of the poor was held to be anterior to the right of the proprietors of the soil to rent or the manufacturers to profit, and in the event of the income arising from the labour and land of the country being inadequate to the supply of the wants of all, each class in its own relative position, then that the poor should be the last to suffer ; thus their rights under the old poor law were justly called "sacred and inviolable." Under the new poor law property of all kinds claimed priority, and divorced the poor from constitutional right of maintenance. The first was benevolence and justice embodied in law; the second was property and power claiming *all*, under the belief that all poor laws were wrong in principle, and injurious to the interests of the commonwealth.

The new poor law received from the heads of the great parties of Whigs and Conservatives a very general support; the late Duke of Wellington and the late Sir Robert Peel, by their votes, supported the passing of the New Poor Law Bill. The change in the government of the poor was very energetically opposed by the principal supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill, Lord Ashley being an exception to the rule.

It was very soon discovered that the number of children in the factory districts were unequal to the demand under the relay system. In June 1834, a letter was addressed by Mr Edmund Ashworth, to Mr E. Chadwick, secretary to the poor-law commissioners, suggesting that the greatest possible facilities should be afforded to agricultural families, enabling them to move into the manufacturing districts. It had been customary for years on the part of Lancashire millowners to encourage rural labourers and their families to leave their parishes and become residents in the factory districts. There was thus kept up, between the English and the Irish poor, a competition for labour in factories; the object of Mr Ashworth was, to use the

new poor-law commissioners, as the agents of the Lancashire millowners, for the transfer of population from the southern agricultural to the northern manufacturing counties, thereby enabling the Lancashire millowners to cheapen the price of labour. "I am most anxious," wrote Mr Ashworth to Mr Chadwick, "that every facility be given to the removal of labourers from one county to another, according to the demand for labour; this would have a tendency to equalise wages, as well as prevent, in degree, some of the turn outs which have of late been so prevalent." Mr Robert Hyde Greg, in a letter addressed to Mr E. Chadwick, on the same subject, and bearing date, September 17, 1834, observes, "The suggestion I would make is this, that some official channel of communication should be opened in two or three of our large towns with your office, to which the overcharged parishes should transmit lists of their families. Manufacturers short of labourers, or starting new concerns, might look over the lists and select, as they might require (for the variety of our wants is great), large families or small ones, young children or grown-up men, or widows, or orphans, &c."

In a letter on the same subject, addressed to Mr E. Chadwick, by Mr Henry Ashworth, "Turton, near Bolton, Lancashire," and bearing date February 13, 1835, there are the following passages:—"I may with safety state, by way of encouragement to them (the unfortunate poor of rural districts), that there is in this neighbourhood a greater scarcity of workpeople than I have ever known, and this fact was never more universally acknowledged, not only by those engaged in manufactures, but by others also, in almost every branch of trade. I know of no better way to promote the emigration of families, than the direct transmission of them to some extensive field of manufacture; allow them a temporary abode for a few days, and the assistance of an active trusty person, to show

them and make them acquainted with the nature of the employments offering, and the rates of wages paying; and when they have selected such as appear most likely to suit them, and bargained for their wages, they will soon become regularly domiciled, and will feel better satisfied with their change, than they would otherwise have been, had they undertaken a blind bargain with a registry office."

More correspondence of a similar kind, on the same subject, will be found by reference to the poor law reports for 1835, from the appendices to which the above extracts have been copied. The poor law commissioners opened an office in Manchester, under the superintendence of Mr Muggeridge, to accelerate the transfer of labourers from the south. The spirit with which this traffic was conducted may be judged of by reading the following extracts from a letter by Mr Langston, the travelling Agent of the Ampthill and Woburn board of Guardians. "At Derby I found an opening for children, from nine to seventeen, &c. A number of persons to the amount of one hundred, sent at different periods (say ten every two or three weeks), could now be employed, and many more will be wanted early in the spring, at the different mills of Messrs Taylor, Bridgett, and More, with other silk manufacturers. At another there is an opening for ten or fifteen children; widows with families might be sent, and homes would be provided for those without mothers, with careful people. At Stockport, two families might be sent, with as many children above ten as can be found, to Mr Robinson, of Spring Bank; and if they (the families) suit, two more; and no doubt more would follow. Messrs Marshall and Sons would be glad of a widow and family, and provided the children were numerous, a family with a father would not be objected to."—October 17th, 1835.

The period to which these dates refer was one of "commercial prosperity," which, in 1837, was followed by "com-

mercial depression." The sufferings of the labourers, women and children, imported into the manufacturing districts, were necessarily very great, and were made known to the poor-law commissioners in London, by their Manchester agent, Mr Muggeridge.

The opposition of Mr Oastler, Mr Fielden, Mr Bull, and others, to the new poor law, had its foundation in the conviction that the old poor law was Christian and constitutional, that the new poor law was anti-Christian and unconstitutional. They said, "Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's land-mark;" and the old parochial system in their judgment was the land-mark of the labourer. The centralizing system of the new poor law, they denounced with a solemnity and earnestness akin to the spirit of Hebrew prophets. While, allowing the factory experiment a trial, they transferred their opposition unimpaired to what they, quoting the words of the first Earl of Eldon, designated, "the most infamous law that ever was enacted in any Christian country." No doubt, this opposition was increased in intensity, because of the use made of the powers with which parliament had invested the new poor-law commissioners, as regarded the supply of the factory districts with "hands" from the agricultural counties.

The poor-law commissioners caused advertisements to be circulated in the rural districts, setting forth the advantages of migration to the manufacturing districts. In many cases these advertisements were, by the poor-law guardians, shown to the paupers, who were, if persuasion failed, told to make their choice between removal and the union workhouse, with all its horrors of separation and prison-like surveillance. Many of those who were thus driven from their native parishes, afterwards complained bitterly of their changed lot in life. Work in the mills was burdensome indeed to those who had been accustomed to the healthful labour of the fields. For workers in the mills there was no gleaning

in harvest, no cottage and garden, no pig, nor a plentiful supply of milk. These unfortunate labourers had in most cases to undergo grievous disappointments; they were generally hired or rather sold for three years at fixed rates of wages; these were lower than the current wages of the neighbourhood. The glowing pictures of high wages, low-priced provisions, and family comfort, of which they had been told were deceitful promises; the reality was the reverse of what they had been assured would be their happy fate in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Sometimes those serfs of the soil, sold to the lords of the mills, would be misdirected, carted to Halifax, when the desired destination was Leeds, and so on; wherever left by their guide, there they would stand, enquiring of every passer-by if he could give them any information as to their future employer, until some kind Samaritan pitied their case and tried to unravel the mystery. Instances have been known of families sent into districts in which their services were not wanted, and they, in consequence, were left to get on as they best could, the deluded victims of a heartless policy. The opponents of the new poor law published accounts of many cases of the kind referred to, giving names, dates, and circumstances. These accounts were eagerly read by the factory-workers, who declared enmity against the new poor law, and renewed their pledges to continue their efforts for a ten hours' bill. Such circumstances made plain to the understandings of the factory operatives the intimate connection between the new poor law and long hours of labour in factories, and, in consequence, increased their hatred of and opposition to both.

In the opinion of Mr Oastler and his coadjutors against the new poor law, labour was by that act placed absolutely at the mercy of the capitalists; under its operation the poor were forced to work, without any legal power of resistance, for such wages as they were offered, to starve or suffer a penal imprisonment. It was contended that the certain

effects of that act would be to increase the competition of the labourers in the labour market; to crowd the manufacturing districts with a greater population than could be regularly employed; to increase the competition of employers against each other, and thereby lower prices, profits, wages; to strengthen the feeling of the employers against factory regulation, and the necessity on the part of the employed for THE TEN HOURS' BILL.

In the mind of Mr Oastler, the new poor law severed the clergy from the poor, destroyed the connection between the rate-payers and their dependants, broke up the homes of the labourers necessitated by occasional scarcity to sue for relief, separated families, and forced the virtuous and the vicious, indiscriminately, to herd together. It thus sapped the very foundation of the ancient parochial system. He was convinced that the strength of England could only be maintained by an increased application of the industry of her labourers to her fields; and he believed, he saw, in all the acts of the poor-law commissioners, a desire to build up the towns at the cost of the agriculture, and the health of the country. Strong in the energy of his will, naturally vigorous and enthusiastic, he was unsparing in his condemnation, and the migration scheme was in letters, pamphlets, and speeches, a constant object of denunciation.

Mr Oastler believed that the new poor law was the offspring of covetousness on the part of the rich, and so was the unregulated factory system. Mr Oastler had read in his Bible "Turn not your face from the poor man." He had read in the speech in which Lord Brougham introduced the Poor Law Bill that "hospitals for the support of old men and old women, may, strictly speaking, be regarded as injurious in their effects on the community. Nevertheless, their evil may be counterbalanced by the good they do. But the next species of charity to which I would refer, is one which sins grievously against all

sound principle—I mean hospitals for children, whether endowed by the public, or by the charity of individuals. These, with the exception of orphan hospitals, are mere evils ; and the worst of all is a foundling hospital." To reconcile the spirit of his lordship's speech, which was also the spirit of the new poor law, with the divine precept was beyond Mr Oastler's power, and, consistently with his own principles, he believed that to resist such a law was a Christian duty. The poor-law commissioners, in keeping with the spirit of the law, issued a public notice, announcing that—" a principal object of a compulsory provision for the relief of destitution, is the prevention of almsgiving." An order which the late Sir Robert Peel, in a debate in the House of Commons in 1841, characterised in the words: " Good God! it is a complete desecration of the precepts of the divine law ! ' Give alms to the poor,' ' turn not. your face from the poor man.' " Sir Robert thus proved, in 1841, the anti-Christian character of the poor law, asserted by Mr Oastler in 1834. Certainly the condemned order of the poor-law commissioners was not, in any sense, a departure from the spirit of the law, or from the openly-avowed intentions of its original promulgators. The two following extracts, the first from a speech, the second from a letter, will better than any words at our command convey Mr Oastler's impressions of the spirit and object of the new poor law : " If this starvation measure," said he, " be forced upon the country, it will produce a great deal of crime; our prisons will be filled with delinquents, and much more serious expenses will be incurred by their prosecution, than the new poor law can save by preventing relief being given to the poor. The great argument for the passing of this law in the House of Commons was, that if the old law had been allowed to remain in force, it would ultimately have taken away the whole landed estates of the wealthy. The old law never took more

than eight millions, and out of that amount four millions were annually spent in litigation. This was indeed a strange argument. They begrudged a little pittance which was to be paid to the poor, and determined, if they could, to prevent them having any aid. This showed them the necessity of being ready to oppose this enactment. If the people of England had done their duty to themselves before this bill was introduced into the House of Commons, there would not have been any need for such meetings as these."

"I have this moment," wrote Mr Oastler, "returned from beholding one of those awful scenes—so grand, so terrific—which force man to acknowledge the existence and the power of that being whose 'is the sea,' because he made it; a scene which feeble man can never contemplate without reverence and awe. I have been standing on the beach, when a mighty storm was raging, and the sea was troubled; roaring, as the waves in majestic grandeur, rolled upon the agitated surface, 'and beat about the dry land,' which the same God had 'prepared' as a boundary for the safe residence of man. His voice, louder than the ocean's thunder, proclaimed: 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, here shalt thy proud waves be stayed.' The tempest cracked and howled around me. The sea in mountains of water, rolled in terrific waves, and, curling themselves together as they approached the shore, as if, in united force, to vent their rage at the interruption offered to their conquering course, they dashed themselves in fury upon the beach; thus, spending themselves in volumes of foam, covering the strand (which seemed to laugh at their menaces), with broad layers of quivering froth. The sight was truly magnificent. Thank God! no ships were nigh. No lives, as far as our eyes could reach, were endangered. As I stood listening to the howling of the wind, the roaring of the waves, and watching the raging of the ocean, I thought—just so furiously is man now

raging against his fellow man—just so is infidelity now vainly daring to vent its rage and malice against Christianity—just now, embodied in the accursed new poor law, is falsehood warring against truth ; tyranny against justice; Satan against God. But as surely as these waves are stayed by this sandy beach, so surely shall it soon be said to that power infernal, which now seems to hold our destiny in his hands, ' Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther.' "

The anti-new-poor-law agitation, though separated from the Ten Hours' Bill movement, was analogous in spirit, and served to keep alive the senses of the people to what they felt to be their wrongs and believed to be their rights. The transfer of population from the rural to the manufacturing districts was loudly condemned, and the necessity for the Ten Hours' Bill was a theme of frequent conversation and reference. The passing of the New Poor Law Amendment Act did more to sour the hearts of the labouring population, than did the privations consequent on all the actual poverty of the land. Rightly, or wrongly, may be a subject of discussion, but the fact is undeniable, that the labourers of England believed that the new poor law was a law to punish poverty; and the effects of that belief were, to sap the loyalty of the working men, to make them dislike the country of their birth, to brood over their wrongs, to cherish feelings of revenge, and to hate the rich of the land. These results did not lessen the necessity of, nor the desire for, factory regulation, and its supporters awaited the trial of the government measure, with confidence in the soundness of their own judgment, and distrust in the judgment of the authors of the existing factory law. Those, old enough to remember these times of stirring political and social interest, will bear testimony to the important crisis this country has lived through, from the passing of the Reform Bill until now. Very much of the political excitement of later years had its origin in the

passing of the New Poor Law Amendment Act. The leaders of the chartist movement, without an exception, made the new poor law the burden of their complaint against the government and the owners of property. They said, in the bitterness of anger, "Laws grind the poor, and rich men make the law." In the earlier stages of the chartist movement, the objects of the leaders were social; very few among their disciples cared for political power for its own sake, all looked to ulterior objects. The late Mr O'Connor, in and out of parliament, opposed the New Poor Law Amendment Act, and supported the Ten Hours' Bill. The late Mr Beaumont, Mr Hetherington, and Mr Cleve, were strenuous opponents of the new poor law. Mr Bronterre O'Brien has, throughout a lengthened political career, opposed the political economists and Malthusians on all the more important social questions of the age. It was the conviction of the late Mr Walter, of the *Times*, that chartism was the offshoot of the oppression of the poor, under the new poor law. Lord John Russell broadly stated that chartism sprang out of the "agitation got up against the Poor Law Amendment Act." The opinions of his lordship, and of Mr Walter, on this point harmonize ; they require, in our opinion, considerable qualification. They, however, fully corroborate our conclusion, that the New Poor Law Amendment Act increased to a great extent the discontent of the country ; it is also noteworthy that the chartists, in their crusade of opposition against other parties, political and social, were, at public meetings, properly so called, unanimous and overwhelming ; but they, instead of carrying out their policy of opposition, against the anti-poor-law agitation and the Ten Hours' Bill movement, invariably, without any reference to party politics, supported both—a circumstance deserving the attention of the student in political and social progress, and of statesmen. It is also a startling fact in the social and legislative history of this country, that the principle and objects of the new poor law, as originally promulgated

by its authors, have been in practice very much modified, its harsher provisions have been abolished, and there has been a growing tendency towards the spirit and practice of the old poor law, as regards the treatment of the poor. The scientific "statesmen," as they were pleased to call themselves, who originated the new poor law, and, in Earl Fitzwilliam's words, supported it as "a step to no poor law at all," have thus undergone reproof at the hands of time.

It was one of the openly avowed objects of the poor-law commissioners, that they would "depauperise England by the terror of the workhouse." Mr Mott, Assistant Poor-law Commissioner, assured Mr Oastler, that if the union workhouses, then in the course of erection, should be filled, the law would be found a failure, "the object in building those union-houses being to establish therein a discipline so severe and repulsive, as to make them a terror to the poor, and prevent them from entering." "By that test," added Mr Mott, "our principles will be tried; if the union-houses should be occupied we shall have been proved in the wrong, but if they should remain empty, we shall know that we were right." England has not been depauperised, the workhouses have again and again been filled to overflowing. It is in the nature of poverty to overcome every obstacle but itself, and to permanently fear no terror that the ingenuity of man can suggest. Between 1834 and 1837, various circumstances combined to reduce poor rates; the supporters of the new poor law trumpeted the success of their measure. The illusion was of short duration: 1838 indicated the adverse change, and succeeding years have proved the principle of the new poor law to be a decided failure. So far from the new poor law having been, as its founders declared, "a step to no poor law at all," it has been the predecessor of organised poor laws for Ireland and Scotland, to the serious annoyance of the economists, and the benefit of the poor and the rich of Ireland and Scotland. Several among the more prominent of the

supporters of factory regulation were opposed to Mr Oastler's views on the connection between the poor law and factory questions. We copy his ripened judgment on the course he pursued:—

"Many a time," says Mr Oastler, in a letter, bearing date July, 1856, "I have been asked, What connection can there be between the Ten Hours' Bill and the New Poor Law Bill? I answered logically. But prejudice and party feeling resisted my appeals to reason; and even by my most valued and most beneficent friend and coadjutor, I was forsaken, and, therefore, left to my own weak resources when the progress of the Ten Hours' Bill was very expensive.

"The two questions were, are, and ever must be inseparably connected. It was in evidence that the new poor law was intended to be used to perpetuate slavery in factories. The Ten Hours' Bill was intended to destroy that slavery. It was in evidence that the new poor law was intended to decrease the wages of the factory operatives. The Ten Hours' Bill was, as I always believed and maintained, calculated to increase those wages. It was in evidence that the new poor law was, by the introduction of the families of agricultural labourers into the factory districts, intended to increase the competition for labour in factories. The Ten Hours' Bill was intended and calculated to decrease that competition. For those and for other very weighty reasons, we resolved, as I think, most wisely, and I am sure, as Ten Hours' Bill men, most consistently, to resist the passing of the New Poor Law Bill. Under my convictions it would, in myself, have been worse than cowardice, had I otherwise acted. It would have involved the sacrifice of principle and truth, and a good conscience, to the short-sightedness of others. To have been saved by the ever-watchful providence of God, from shipwreck on that rock, I account among my greatest mercies."

On July the 29th, 1835, the supporters of factory regulation endured a serious loss in the death of Mr Sadler. He had removed from Yorkshire to Belfast, at which place he died, aged fifty-five. The grave had not long closed over his remains, before his merits were acknowledged by those whose approbation was honour.

Mr Sadler's claims on the respect of posterity do not rest alone on his efforts in parliament, though these were important. His pen was the first which successfully proved the foundation of the Malthusian theory of the *super-fecundity* of the human species to be hollow and untenable—a theory no longer advocated by any statesman or author of reputation, and which the Census commissioners of 1851 have disproved by an appeal to the facts of population as made known to them through investigation. The persevering industry of Mr Sadler brought to light many circumstances in connection with population, and the means existing for its sustenance, which previous to his work, thereon, were but little known and indifferently understood. His work on Ireland was a noble contribution to the social and political literature of the century, and its merits were acknowledged by statesmen of all parties.

A monument was erected by public subscription to his memory, in the parish church of Leeds, in 1835, and in 1856 another has been raised over his body in the churchyard of Ballylesson, County Down. On both are appropriate inscriptions, and his memory as a philanthropist, an author, statesman, and friend, is fondly cherished by those whose opportunities of knowing and judging were many. His labours on behalf of the interests of the poor and the oppressed have been of real and permanent service to society, and are worthy of grateful remembrance.

CHAPTER V.

UNSATISFACTORY OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT FACTORIES' ACT—EXCITEMENT IN THE MANUFACTURING DISTRICTS—EFFORTS OF MR CHARLES HINDLEY, M.P. FOR ASHTON, TO OBTAIN A TEN HOURS' ACT, WITH A RESTRICTION ON THE MOVING POWER—ATTEMPT OF THE GOVERNMENT TO REPEAL PART OF THEIR OWN ACT IN 1836—ABANDONMENT OF THEIR ENDEAVOUR.

LEGISLATIVE enactments bearing upon the practices of numerous bodies of working men, to be beneficial, require to be framed with the greatest possible regard to circumstances. Those parties most capable of forming correct opinions as to the details of such legislation, are, necessarily, those most closely connected with the actual circumstances of the parties legislated for. "It is," said Edmund Burke, "one of the finest problems in legislation, and what has often engaged my thoughts whilst I followed that profession:—'What the state ought to take upon itself to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave with as little interference as possible, to individual discretion.' Nothing, certainly, can be laid down on the subject that will not admit of exceptions, many permanent, some occasional." This is the language of practical wisdom, and, in few words, leaves the theory of universal non-interference, or the opposite, to the system-mongers, who are blind to the wants of men. It may be, under some circumstances, a grave error to endeavour to modify very strictly the practices of society by the force of positive laws, but the error is not less serious which allows

positive evils to exist, injurious to body and mind, from the fear of exerting a power inherent in the very constitution of society for the wisest of purposes. The more complete the freedom allowed to the exercise of those principles of the human constitution, which in their own nature are positively good, the greater in proportion must be the virtue and happiness of mankind. On the other hand, the more thoroughly that which is in itself evil can be restrained, the less influence will it exercise over the habits of society. Of this, statesmen may rest assured, that no discoveries as to the motives of man, his interests, or duties, can lessen their responsibilities, and, that whatever they resolve to do, will require at their hands the most careful consideration in all that relates to details as well as principles; the more simple and uniform laws are in operation, the more complete the means of discovering their violation is rendered, the more uniform and satisfactory will they prove in practice.

One of the surest modes of bringing government into discredit, is to pass laws which, in practice, are easy of evasion, or from inconsiderate legislation are impracticable. Every step taken in practical legislation is surrounded by some difficulties; these do not constitute a valid defence for legislative bungling, nor for the foolish cry of "Do nothing." So absurd was the government Factories' Act in its details, that practical men in favour of legislation on that subject were frequently heard to declare, "The law is not intended to be obeyed; the object of those who framed it is to disgust the people with factory legislation; it is the law of the enemies of all factory legislation." Mr Steward, one of the factory commissioners, had stated that the government listened to what he designated "a bit of a parliament of millowners," who were opposed to all legislation; but when they found that a law on the question must be passed, desired to render it as impracticable as possible, consistently with their desire to work their factories for the longest possible hours.

To the younger children employed in factories, the operation of the act was beneficial, inasmuch as it limited the hours of their labour to eight per day; even this relief from labour was paid for by the labour of the children between thirteen and eighteen years of age, who, in most cases, were required to perform not only their own tasks but those of the absent children. To the adult operatives the operation of the act was vexatious and harassing; to those spinners who themselves employed and paid children, it caused a direct loss in wages; the scarcity of the younger children caused an advance of their wages, which was not met by a corresponding advance on the part of the masters. The act having allowed the earlier employment of young children in silk than in cotton mills, caused an excess in the former and a deficiency in the latter. To the millowners and occupiers the operation of the act was unsatisfactory. It caused confusion in the conduct of extensive works, because of the difficulty of procuring an adequate supply of work-people of the various ages; this was more especially the case in fine spinning establishments in which young children were employed in greater numbers.

On the authority of the factory inspectors, the number of factories actually at work and reported on, early in the year 1835, was 1948, the number of the convictions under the factories act was 177, thus every eleventh millowner had been proved guilty of an offence against the law, or a lower number had been proved guilty of one or more offences. The number of convictions does not even indicate the number of times the law was violated; the government were energetic in their efforts to enforce the law, but many among the local magistracy, of Lancashire especially, themselves millowners or related to or influenced by millowners, made no secret of their disregard for the law. This very reprehensible conduct on the part of some among the magistrates, was subject

of complaint by the factory inspectors, and a source of very great annoyance to the supporters of factory regulation. Assuredly such proceedings were very discreditable, and contributed to bring not only the Factory Act, but the very principles on which law rests into disrepute. The principal among the leaders of the factory question did not interfere, the agitation of the question out of doors had ceased, Mr Oastler and Mr Bull, in their own words, "had resolved to give the master's act fair play;" they, however, closely watched the whole proceedings, and, in common with their supporters, awaited anxiously for the next movement on the part of the government.

In the summer of 1835, Mr Oastler addressed a series of letters to the editors of the most popular unstamped political periodicals of the time, and he continued in the unstamped press to make known the whole history of the factory movement, and his views thereon. In this course Mr Oastler was opposed by some of his dearest friends, who were shocked at the thought of him, a churchman and tory, writing in the pages of what they knew to be "radical and revolutionary journals." These letters were certainly among the ablest Mr Oastler has written, they contained very graphic descriptions of scenes from life, as he had witnessed them, and as they had been narrated to him by others. In these letters, Mr Oastler avowed broadly his opinions on infidelity and republicanism, and his regard for the church and the constitution. On being questioned in *The Twopenny Despatch* on behalf of the "Manchester Radical Association," as to his opinions on "Universal Suffrage," he answered through the same medium. "My opinion on 'Universal Suffrage' is, that if it were the law of the land next week, it would in a very short time produce 'universal confusion,' and would inevitably lead to 'despotism.'" The unstamped press had,

at the time referred to, command of the active mind of the working men. Mr Oastler had the merit of seeing that this was a source of strength, that it was desirable on his part to possess and control. As he used to say: "I have petitioned the two houses of parliament, I have endeavoured to gain the ear of the King of England; and I firmly believe his majesty would have listened had there not been a power behind the throne greater than the throne. I have addressed the church, the aristocracy; I have not been idle in public meetings. I have attended these from a Yorkshire county meeting with the High Sheriff in the chair; a city of London meeting, with the Lord Mayor in the chair, down to a country village meeting, with an operative for chairman; as yet I have not succeeded. I have tried the press, pamphlet after pamphlet have I sent forth, full of 'mourning, lamentation and woe,' but the rulers of the land have turned a deaf ear, the stamped newspapers have been witnesses of my exertions, yet 'Yorkshire slavery' still exists! Now I will labour in another field, in it I will sow the seed, and the harvest will come in its season, I want the aid of all parties, and must work on until I succeed." The resolution was politic and far-seeing, and much of the popular feeling afterwards manifested on behalf of the Ten Hours' Bill had its foundation in the letters written by Mr Oastler in the unstamped press. "Knowing, as I do," continued Mr Oastler, "that the working men and their families do not obtain the stamped press, and that the unstamped press is universally read by them; regardless of caste or party, I have resolved to avail myself of the only medium through weekly periodicals, in which I can effectually communicate what I know and think on subjects most important to the working men."

Towards the close of 1835 very considerable excitement prevailed in the factory districts as to the course the govern-

ment intended to pursue on the factory question. The law had been proved to be unsatisfactory, and when the additional restriction, limiting the employment of children under thirteen years of age to not more than forty-eight hours in any one week, or longer than nine hours in any one day, came into operation, the dissatisfaction and difficulty would increase. This change would occur early in 1836, all parties interested were, therefore, preparing for the future. Mr Charles Hindley, an extensive millowner, and member of parliament for the borough of Ashton-under-Lyne, had made known his intention to the operatives of introducing to parliament a bill for regulating the hours of labour to ten per day, with a restriction on the moving power. Mr Hindley was well known in the manufacturing districts, and the operatives felt very anxious to know his opinions on all phases of the short-time question. On December the 5th, 1835, a meeting of a very important character was held at the Albion Hotel, Manchester, consisting of delegates from the spinners of Bolton, Bury, Ashton, Preston, Oldham, Chorley, and Manchester; and Mr Phillips, M.P. for Manchester, Mr Brotherton, M.P. for Salford, Mr Fielden, M.P. for Oldham, Mr Hindley, M.P. for Ashton, Mr Potter, M.P. for Wigan, Mr Brocklehurst, M.P. for Macclesfield, Mr Walker, M.P. for Bury. The proceedings of this meeting were very important; the following facts were elicited. That many of the children, certified as being twelve years of age, were known to be under that age; that the increased speed of machinery required increased attention and labour on the part of the spinners. Mr Hindley recommended ten hours a day, and a restriction on the moving power, recommendations which met with the approval of the operatives. Mr Fielden declared himself in favour of the shortest time that could be agreed to, and supported by the assent of parliament. Mr Hindley pledged himself to divide the house on the ten

hours' question, but would not pledge himself to give up his bill, provided he was in a minority. He admired Mr O'Connell, and considered him a superior statesman. It was Mr O'Connell's rule, to ask for what he should have, but to take the most that he could get, and by the strength so acquired to strive for the remainder. Mr Hindley pledged himself to introduce the question of ten hours' labour per day session after session, until that limitation constituted the limit of the factory day. This latter declaration was to the operatives very satisfactory. On the 2nd of January 1836, a delegates' meeting was held in Manchester. Ashton, Oldham, Bury, Bolton, Macclesfield, Manchester, and Preston were represented; Mr Hindley, M.P., Mr Condy, and Mr Bull were present by invitation. At this meeting resolutions were passed in favour of a Ten Hours' Bill, for sending delegates to London, for holding meetings throughout the country to propagate the views of the delegates, and thus to renew the agitation. Mr Hindley stated at length the course of policy he approved, and urged the operatives to send delegates to London, so that every member of the House of Commons should be canvassed on the question. "If the masters asked for twelve hours, let them prove to the House of Commons that this time was required by foreign competition; if the men desired ten hours, let them show that this time is the extreme limit allowed by consideration of humanity. The house must decide between them; and in order to give each party fair play, he would pledge himself to divide the house on the ten hours' clause. With regard to the decision to which the legislature might come, he could only say that, as a practical man, he could not pledge himself to throw up the bill if it did not obtain all that the operatives desired." Mr Bull was decidedly of opinion that a Ten Hours' Bill could alone be practically operative, that the responsibility of any bill, legalizing longer hours of labour, should rest

with those who passed the law, to which he recommended no true Ten Hours' Bill man to be in any sense a party. Mr Bull handed in a paper containing his reasons in support of the decision he, after mature consideration, had arrived at; among these was the following:—"Because ten hours is the least limitation which affords me, as a Christian instructor, any chance of attempting the religious, moral, or literary improvement of my flock." Mr Bull's sense of his responsibilities as a Christian minister were always uppermost in his mind, and were, in themselves, the motives which propelled him to action.

The necessary preliminary arrangements having been entered into, public meetings were held throughout the manufacturing districts, to support Mr Hindley. These meetings, which were numerous and important, had features distinct from the preceding agitation. The mind of the country and the writers for the press had become more familiar with the details of the question. At a meeting in Manchester, held early in March, 1836, the Reverend Joseph Rayner Stephens thus illustrated the connection between the new poor law and the factory question. The Reverend gentleman said :—"Mr Chairman and good men of Manchester : you have this night had a nail or two well driven, and I hope before I have done to clench them. The first speaker has told you that you ought not to be slaves. The second told you that you *ought* to be slaves, though you were not. I tell you—and I hold the evidence of the fact in my hand, and will now adduce it, lest I should forget it—I tell you, in the outset, that you are slaves. I hold in my hand a bargain—a document of sale ; it is the resuscitation of slavery in the British dominions, in the sale, for thrice twelve months, of twelve human beings—the father, mother, and ten children—who this day passed through Ashton on their road to Glossop, which is to be the seat of their slavery for the above time. This, too, takes place under the powers

of the new poor law amendment act; and the tendency of it will be to prevent you from accomplishing the object which has called you together. Your masters talk to you of foreign competition—they are not afraid of that. But you ought to be afraid of home competition. Will you allow me to read the article of contract to which I refer? The individuals are twelve of the finest human beings that can be seen anywhere upon earth. The young people are healthy, lusty, and blooming; how long they will remain so Mr Waterhouse shall tell us. The agreement is between Benjamin Waterhouse and James Aldis—that is the name of the father of the family, but he says that he is no party to it, but that the agreement is between Mr Waterhouse and the overseer of Worlingworth, in Suffolk, which is 100 miles beyond London, from which place the family came down in one of Pickford's fly boats, by canal, and went to the Friendship Inn in Ashton, there to wait for one of Mr Waterhouse's waggons to convey them to Glossop. I will now tell you the price of a man. James Aldis has been bought of the overseer of Worlingworth for 10s. a week for the first year, 11s. shillings the second year, and 12s. the third year. Here follows the price of the respective children with their ages; but I ought to tell that they are all a year older than the age specified in the register.

"Eliza, aged 16 years, is to have 4s. 6d. weekly for the first year, 5s. the second year, and 6s. the third year.

"William, aged 12, is to have 2s. 6d. weekly for the first year, 3s. the second year, 3s. 6d. the third year.

"Lydia, aged 15, is to have 4s., 5s., and 5s. 6d. respectively for the three years.

"Caleb, aged 13, is to have 3s., 3s. 6d., and 4s.

"Joshua, aged 11, is to have 1s. 6d., 2s., and 3s. 6d.

"Rachel, aged nine, is also to have 1s., 1s. 6d. and 2s.

"William, aged nine, is also to have 1s., 1s. 6d. and 2s.

"John, aged eleven, is to have 1s. 6d., 2s., and 3s. 6d.

"Then, on the poor wretch's paper he is told that houses may be had varying from one shilling to four shillings per week; but if iron bedsteads are to be found with the cottages, he must pay one penny per week for each iron bedstead. This, then, is the contract entered into and signed, and it is copied from the poor wretch's paper. He was at first directed just like a bill of parcels—'To Mr Benjamin Waterhouse, Glossop;' but before he would leave the sod—before he would leave the land of his fathers and his childhood, he insisted upon a specific engagement, that he might not be left entirely at the mercy of his *owners*, and the above contract was therefore drawn up. The contract is signed—'Richard Muggeridge, Poor Law Commissioners' Agent for Emigration, Manchester, 9th February, 1836,' and countersigned, 'Benjamin Waterhouse, Glossop, February 2nd.'"

This statement caused very great sensation, and no doubt contributed to keep alive the hatred of the factory workers against the new poor law. Similar statements were made at other meetings. The questions of home and foreign competition were much debated, and Mr Hindley was evidently disposed to give to the question of foreign competition considerable weight. Mr Baines, M.P. for Leeds, also proprietor and senior editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, advocated a compromise for an eleven hours' bill, but this was impossible, for Mr Oastler declared, on the subject being named, that he would agitate for a ten hours' bill to death, or succeed in its accomplishment. He and Mr Bull were, in Yorkshire, all powerful, and so far as the operatives were concerned, Oastler and Bull were popular and powerful throughout every factory district in Great Britain. While the question was in this state in the north, the delegates of the employers and the employed were busy in London. The delegates from the operatives were in London in the beginning of March, every day active in canvassing for support and keeping up a correspondence between themselves, the committees, and the

active leaders in the country. Mr Hindley's bill had been printed and circulated, when it was made known that Mr Poulett Thomson, on behalf of the government, intended to introduce a bill to repeal "the thirteen year old clause," thus making twelve years the limit for those to be employed for eight hours per day. The factory delegates and their influential friends resolved to oppose the government measure and to have moved, in the House of Commons, a ten hours' clause as an amendment. The excitement and anxiety in the factory districts were intense; meetings, remonstrating against the government proposition, were held; every available means in London and the country were applied to insure the defeat of the ministry. At a meeting in Huddersfield, Mr Oastler denounced the proceedings of the government in very strong terms. "He could assure the government that the people of England had determined that their children should be free. He had the Bible, truth, and justice at his back, and in front nothing but gold and Poulett Thomson's bill." At Leeds Mr Oastler was equally decided; he was ably supported by his constant coadjutor, the Rev. Mr Bull. Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire were unanimous against the government proposal, and in favour of a ten hours' bill. The proceedings of these meetings were remarkable for the expression of a strong sense of remonstrance against the change suggested by the government; the principal speakers denounced the intended change in the law as "a violation of every principle of justice and humanity, as if the legislature of this country had not the common lights of moral and Christian precept to direct them;" but the petitioners to the House of Commons resolved to continue the agitation, convinced "that inhumanity had not generally taken possession of the bosoms of fathers and mothers, whatever might be the feelings of masters and legislators." "It is true," said the remonstrants (the petitioners had now changed their tone, and openly declared themselves "remonstrants," a marked difference,

and one which parliament could not fail to have observed) "that petitions to your honourable house, from the people, seem of no avail, but to excite laughter and be rejected," yet they were resolved to persevere. In the Huddersfield remonstrance were the following paragraphs. "Your remonstrants, however, can never forget that 20,000,000*l.* have been paid, out of the labour of these children, to purchase for the black adults eight hours' labour per day, and that the friends of the negro are in motion, with a view of obtaining more power, and a new act to enforce the eight hours' act in Jamaica; yet, strange to say, whilst the laws of humanity are enforced by the government and their friends, when the wrongs of black men require their enforcement, and an appeal (justly indeed) is made to the people of England to raise their voice for this purpose, yet, at the same time, the same government is requiring the same people to submit to the destruction of the same principles of humanity, incorporated in one of their own acts made for the protection of the most industrious, the most oppressed part of the community—the little white factory slaves. The government seem to act on these questions as though the people of England could not judge of the simple principles of right and wrong." "And your remonstrants regret to find that the right honourable the Secretary for the Home Department and the right honourable the President of the Board of Trade have brought in a bill to your honourable house, to repeal the best part of the present bill, which was agreed to by your honourable house to be absolutely necessary for the health and education of the factory children, that act having been granted on the ground of evidence drawn from repeated inquiries, begun by the first Sir Robert Peel, continued by select committee after select committee, and crowned by a royal commission of inquiry—the only reason given *now* for the withdrawal of that protection being, that it is 'expedient' so to do; while your remonstrants, on the

contrary, assert from their own knowledge that the manufacturing districts are in a much better condition than before the passing of that bill, and have been materially improved during its operation.

"Your remonstrants are as decided as ever for a Ten Hours' Bill, on the ground that such a measure would combine the greatest advantages with the least amount of evil or inconvenience, and therefore solemnly protest against any proposition above that standard as being the offspring of avarice, cruelty, and oppression."

On Monday, May the 9th, 1836, Mr Poulett Thomson moved the second reading of the Factories' Act Amendment Bill, which was met by a motion intended to test the strength of the government on the question. Lord Ashley moved, "That the bill be read a second time this day six months." In the debate which followed, the question of factory labour in all its relations was very thoroughly discussed. The government admitted that the existing law was not obeyed. Quoting the authority of the factory inspectors, it was declared to be "almost impossible to enforce the law as it has stood since the 1st of March last." "It had been found almost impossible to procure children enough for the execution of the relay system." "Hence, therefore," said Mr Poulett Thomson, "the necessity for the bill I am now advocating." All the former arguments about the danger of foreign competition, the hardships of children not being allowed to earn their own bread, the necessity for long hours, in order that the operatives should have high wages, the danger of interference with labour and capital were restated by the speakers on behalf of the government, and answered by Lord Ashley and his supporters. The weight of fact and argument was decidedly against the government. The speeches of Lord Ashley and Mr Charles Hindley were distinct and full of facts, proving the inefficiency of the existing law, and the addi-

tional injury which would follow from declaring that all the children above twelve years of age were free agents, and therefore should the government bill become law, subject to work long hours. Mr Brotherton and Mr John Fielden, two practical and successful manufacturers, distinguished themselves by speeches which exhausted the subject. Both were ardent supporters of factory regulation, and had decidedly more practical knowledge of the question than had any other two members of the House of Commons. The late Sir Robert Peel cast the weight of his eloquence and vote into the ministerial scale. The late Mr O'Connell and his family followers voted with the ministers. Not any petitions had been presented in favour of the government bill; there were many opposed thereto. The importance of the decision in the House of Commons may be appreciated from the numbers voting. There were for the second reading, 178; for the amendment, 176; majority, 2.

Some very important facts were stated during the debate. It was affirmed that the firm of Wood and Walker, of Bradford, had complied with the act, and by attention to the physical condition, education, and morals of those in their employment, they had proved that factory labour could be conducted under conditions not seriously injurious to health. Mr Brotherton stated, that on the authority of the factory inspectors, which he, as a practical man, approved, "that human labour, in connection with the machinery of a cotton mill, is not free." The late Mr Baines, of Leeds, stated his opinion, "the result of many years' experience," "that there is no class of children better fed, better clad, better lodged, or more healthy, than those of manufacturers." Sir John Ellery, speaking from his experience "on many recruiting parties," replied: "When the proper officer examines the recruits, he almost invariably rejects five out of ten of the manufacturing classes, whilst of the agricultural he scarcely rejects one out of

ten." Dr Bowring asked, "Why continue in this course of helpless legislation? Why struggle, perpetually, to maintain a state of things which the common interest overthrows? What is the use of laws to which you cannot give effect?" Mr Hindley answered, "Certain gentlemen, averse to any legislation, finding they could not prevent a law, have studiously contrived to make it ineffective, in the hope of inducing the house eventually to reject legislation on the subject." Mr John Fielden reminded the house that, on a recent occasion, the political economists had said: "It would not signify if England did not grow a bushel of wheat or barley, so prosperous were manufactures, and so completely were we independent of land; and yet, according to these same political economists, we cannot go on, in manufactures, without working those poor little children for twelve hours a day. That is our prosperity!" The government were anxious to escape from the operation of their own law: the Ten Hours' Bill men were resolved to bind the government to it, in the hope that they might ultimately consent to an efficient measure of regulation; the government having been in so small a majority, felt their success to be, in fact, equal to a defeat, and resolved that the law should take its course. This resolution was, to the opponents of the Ten Hours' Bill, unsatisfactory, and left them and the government in an unpleasant dilemma.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REV J. R. STEPHENS, HIS PRINCIPLES, ELOQUENCE, TALENT, AND GREAT POPULARITY AS "A POLITICAL PREACHER," IN 1838 AND 39.

JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS is a name familiar to the ears of all the working men in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Mr Stephens is a man of small stature but of great power; he is more than a man of talent and acquirements; he is a man of genius, and possesses the art of reaching and quickening the hearts of others. Mr Stephens began the active duties of life as a Wesleyan Methodist minister, and was, twenty-five years ago, looked up to among his ministerial and lay brethren as "a young man of great promise." It could not be otherwise, for he was gifted with all the requisites of a popular preacher. Mr Stephens's connection with the Wesleyan body was not of long duration.

Whoever can and will, in his own active labours, unite the theologian and politician, and become, as did Mr Stephens, "a political preacher," will, in times of political excitement, increase his popularity and the means at his command for good or for evil. The phrase, "political preacher," is now a term of opprobrium. Without desiring to discuss the abstract question—"What are the proper duties of the ministry in the pulpit?"—we are reminded that the greatest preachers the Church of England has known have made continual

reference to the duties of the *rulers and the ruled.* At the head of the list stand the names of Bishop Latimer and John Wesley.

The centre of Mr Stephens's labours was Ashton-under-Line and district. In 1838 and 1839, he travelled from the Tyne to the Thames as occasion required, and preached in the open air, sometimes thrice on a Sunday, to audiences numbering from five to twenty thousand, speaking at each service from one to three hours, travelling during the week and attending public meetings, at which he was the leading orator. It was calculated by Dr Franklin, that Whitfield, the greatest out-of-doors travelling preacher of his day, might be clearly understood in the open air by 20,000 persons. Mr Stephens has been distinctly heard, on several occasions, by as great a number. The sources of his influence as a political preacher were various. He was an orator, a logician, and knew how to appeal to the affections of the poor. It was his habit to raise himself, step by step, to an altitude of reasoning which all could see; he would then strike out in bold and homely Saxon against his opponents; depict in thrilling words the sufferings of the oppressed, and having pointed to the victims, he would appeal to the affections of the heart, asking, "If the poor had not feelings, sympathies, and love for their kind and country?" Mr Stephens was never more thoroughly "at home" than when talking of the gambols of children, the affections of mothers, the duties of manhood; by appealing to the innermost workings of the heart of each, he concentrated the sympathies of all. He received power from, as well as gave force to, the thousands of human beings, to whose hearts his words were welcome messengers of reproof and hope. This is the case with every really popular speaker; hence the failure of the best possible reports of speeches to convey the electric influence which bound audience and orator. Few truer words have been penned

than those of Hooker—"He that goeth about to persuade a multitude that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers, because they know the manifold defects whereunto every kind of regiment is subject; but the secret lets and difficulties, which in public proceedings are innumerable and inevitable, they have not ordinarily the judgment to consider. And because such as openly reprove supposed disorders of state, are taken for principal friends to the common benefit of all, and for men who carry singular freedom of mind; under this fair and plausible colour, whatsoever they utter passeth for good and current. That which wanteth in the weight of their speech is supplied by the aptness of men's minds to accept and believe it." Mr Stephens possessed the faculties which in action could not fail to give to the side he espoused increased influence; but he was, for the reason stated by Hooker, more popular than he would have been had he been the supporter of government, yet, surely, he advocated no measure for popularity's sake, for no man has greater moral courage, or knows better how to bear neglect or slander, or can laugh more heartily at the venom of personal or party sarcasm. It is due to truth to say that few men can more boldly oppose a multitude, when he believes them to be in error. The religious and political tenets of Mr Stephens were thus sketched by himself before his congregation in Ashton-under-Line, in a new year's day address in 1839—they are substantially a summary of his preaching and teaching:—"I exhort you, my brethren, again to possess your souls in patience in reference to everything that concerns you now, and that awaits you in time to come—everything, especially, that relates to your enthralled and unhappy country at this eventful crisis in her social and religious history. I know how the heart of her children heaves with the flutterings of a new-born hope, and again sinks down burdened with a dark despair. But be patient, brethren, ye have need of patience;

for, rest assured, the year on which you have just entered will not only be the trying year, but the telling year of England's future destinies. The battle which we are now fighting, from one end of England to the other, is not the battle which most men take it to be. It goes much further—it runs much deeper than most men have yet supposed it to do. It is not a battle of party against party for the time being. It is not a struggle for power or for place among men who, for the moment, are placed in antagonistic relation to each other. Much less is it a war of words—a mere strife between unthinking men about trifling points of faith, the idle theories, the dry abstractions, or the circumstantial —secondary relations of acknowledged law when applied to practice. No. It is the question of law or no law—order or anarchy—religion or infidelity—heaven-sprung truth and peace and love ; or hell-born, withering atheism. It is the working of the mystery mentioned in the Holy Scripture —the mystery of ungodliness—the battle directly, though not ostensibly—the struggle actually, though not openly avowed—the life and death struggle of Christ in his spirit, and through his spirit in his followers, against Belial in his spirit, and through his spirit in his children. It is the battle between God and Mammon—between Christ and Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. The question is whether God shall reign in England, or whether Satan shall domineer—the question is, whether the laws of Heaven and its institutions of mercy are to be the laws of a Christian land, and the institutions of a Christian people ; or whether laws begotten below, and born here on earth, are to be the laws and institutions to which a once Christian land and a once Christian people are to be compelled to submit. It is the battle, my brethren, of this book (the Bible) against the men of the world and against hell. If this book stand, they fall. If this book fall, great will be the temporary fall of the house of God, and you will be buried in its ruins.

The lists are drawn—the battle is set—the field is pitched—deadly will be the struggle; and who is able—who feels himself willing to enter into that warfare? Pray God that He would teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight.

"I am well aware, my brethren, that I have long been charged—indeed, have always been charged, with a deviation—a positive departure from the line of duty prescribed to the profession, of which I am an unworthy member, though I trust an upright, a sincere and a devoted one It is said that I have dishonoured and desecrated that holy office, by neglecting the purely religious and exclusively spiritual claims, which the church has made upon the time, the talents, and the influence of her ministers—by postponing the discussion of abstract doctrines, the tenets of a metaphysically reasoned system of theology—or the admitted articles of a settled and established orthodoxy—and instead of this, or before this, or along with this,—insisting on the obligation the whole Christian world is under to carry into actual, visible, immediate practice the plain precepts of that religion—whose first and last, and only law on earth is, that we should love our neighbour as ourself—doing unto others as we would they should do to us. It has been my practice, and been charged upon me as a crime—to apply the rules of God's commandments to various institutions of the social system, in my own immediate neighbourhood, and in the country at large—to bring the principles and operations of the manufactures, the commerce, and the legislation of this professedly Christian land to the standard of God's holy word,—the law of the Creator,—the witness-bearer of his mind and will to man. I have asked whether merchants, senators, and statesmen are amenable to any authority higher than themselves, or whether they are free to do what their own thirst for gold or lust of power may lead them to attempt to execute

upon the poor—the weak—the unfriended and defenceless portions of the community. I have asked whether all rights are not reciprocal—all duties relative—all privileges mutual—held together by all in the holy bonds of righteousness and love; whether there be not some given, acknowledged, and universally admitted standard of truth and untruth; right and wrong—good and evil;—whether the standard be not the written word of God—whether the God by whom that word was written be not the one law-giver,—the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the only ruler of princes? If it be so—and that there is none will gainsay,—I have gone on to inquire whether the practices of the factory system, for instance, are in accordance with the precepts of our most holy religion,—whether Christian millowners are justified in pursuing a system of manufacture, which has done more to injure the health,—impair the constitution,—and demoralize the character of a vast mass of our population, than any other recorded in history,—which has made such a fearful waste of the natural, the social, and the moral life of our industrious countrymen, that it has become a question—not only whether the silken ties, that should bind society in love, can any longer hold her various members within its soft and peaceful circle; but whether the race itself,—the human breed, be not so far degenerate as to threaten imbecility, idiotcy, or actual extinction to a most extensive and alarming degree? I have asked, especially, whether the principles of our modern political economy can be made to quadrate with the statements of divine revelation,—whether it be indeed true that the earth is too small for its inhabitants,—whether the beings born into the world are indeed too many, or multiply too fast for its harvests—the production of its husbandry and the supplies that lie hidden in the mysterious storehouses of the great Creator of heaven and earth—whether to keep down the population of a Christian country be in accordance with

the commandments of that Father in heaven, who made man at first in his own likeness—a being of knowledge and righteousness,—who loved him from the beginning, and sent his Son to seek the lost and raise the fallen, to whose eye all the springs of action in man were open and uncovered. who had not to learn from another what man was, and what he was not,—what he knew and what he did not know,—what he could do and what he could not do,—where and how he could settle in his wanderings,—where and how he would have to live and move, and have his being here upon earth, during his progress through the world of men and things seen to the author of beings and of things as yet unseen, I have asserted that the God and Father of mankind has in His wisdom and of His great goodness written out His will to man in this holy book, the Bible. That will makes fully known to man all he has to learn—all he has to trust in—all he has to do in the many and varied relations in which he may be placed in reference to his fellow-men. His duties all rising from one spring, flow into different channels, as the case may be. As a child the bend of duty is to father and mother—as one of other children to brethren—as husband or wife to wedded mate—as householder or master to those that are around or near him—as a son of the soil—a child of his fatherland, the drift of duty is to the overhead, the Father King, whose law of love, the image transcript and impression of the will of heaven, gives equal shelter and protection to all the members of the commonwealth—as monarch or magistrate the drift of duty is as direct and as strong towards the governed for their good and happiness as is the homage of the subject towards the liege lord,—the lawful, because the righteous sovereign of a loyal and obedient, because a happy and prosperous people. I have argued that to the holding of an even beam, the weight of reciprocal obligation must correspond in either scale. If one, no matter which of them preponderate, the

equilibrium is lost—the balance of society is destroyed. This idea of the harmony subsisting between the various branches of the great national family I have found in the word of the Lord, the only book in the world that has upon its pages—and communicates to all men, everywhere alike, the immutable principles of truth and righteousness and love. Seeing this to be the truth taught us by God, I have striven to teach it to my fellow-men—for of what use are the principles of moral science, unless they be applied to the actual circumstances of the individuals, before whom they are set forth—and be morally brought out into the practice of their lives?" This was a groundwork sufficiently broad to give good standing-room for an able and efficient preacher, who knew how to make special applications of texts against refractory and greedy millowners, and the propagators of Malthusian poor laws. What Mr Stephens' political principles were, was, for long, a matter of uncertainty; he was not prone to be explicit, and preferred, in politics, to enjoy the advantages, and bear with the disadvantages of mystery. In all speeches and sermons of Mr Stephens, factory labour and poor laws, were favourite topics; he often invoked the power of God on "the side of the oppressed, and against the oppressor." It was impossible that a public man of Stephens' mark could continue his career unchecked; he was attacked and denounced in 1838 by the radicals of several localities; to these attacks he issued an explanatory reply.

CHAPTER VII.

PLEDGE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO COMPEL OBEDIENCE TO THE FACTORIES' REGULATION ACT.—REFUSAL OF MAGISTRATES TO ENFORCE THE LAW.—DETERMINATION OF MR OASTLER TO INSURE OBEDIENCE, HIS THREAT OF "THE LAW OR THE NEEDLE."—IMPORTANT PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR THE TEN HOURS' BILL.—SPEECH OF MR STEPHENS AT OLDHAM, 1836.

THE nominal victory of the government was practically a defeat; they felt it to be so, and resolved to allow the Factory Act to remain in force. On June 23rd, 1836, Mr Charles Hindley, in the House of Commons, "moved for leave to bring in a bill, to amend the present Factory Act." The motion of the member for Ashton was received by the house with surprise, but it served the useful purpose of wringing from an unwilling government, a direct and distinct pledge that the existing law should be enforced, with all the authority at its command, and also an acknowledgment from the lips of Lord John Russell, that the introduction of a new bill on the subject would render the efforts of the government, to carry the law into effect, inoperative. None knew better than his lordship the difficulty of enforcing the Factory Act; in not a few instances, the same persons were millowners, magistrates, and opponents to all factory legislation. In the theory of the British constitution, the legislative and executive branches are separate; the more complete the

correspondence between the theory and the practice, the better for Queen and subjects. Experience has very fully proved in the factory districts of Lancashire, that magistrates have refused to enforce the law, when opposed to their own desires and what they believed to be their own interests; the prevalence of so dangerous a procedure is highly culpable, and is, to whatever extent practised, tyrannical. The pledge of Lord John Russell that the Government Factories' Act should be enforced was very important. Mr Hindley, finding the feeling of parliament favourable to a further trial of "the experimental act," and hostile to further legislation on the subject, withdrew his motion.

The various short-time committees were pleased with their position and prospects. They had gained a victory, proved to themselves and to others their power in the legislature, now that the government had undertaken the responsibility of enforcing an Act, which operatives and millowners believed to be impracticable; the former resolved to persevere in their demands for a Ten Hours' Act, hoping to profit from the difficulties of their employers and the government. "The united delegates from the factory districts" issued an address to their constituents, setting forth in glowing terms the struggles which had been undergone, in the hope of gaining a Ten Hours' Bill. "For nearly half a century," said the united delegates, "it has been officially declared that the factory system is committing a continuous and increasing crime against mankind—inflicting sure and certain DEATH, on those who have been drawn, and are compelled to continue, within its widely-extended vortex. It has been charged with wholesale murder; with the actual, though gradual, slaughter of free-born Englishmen, women, and their children. It has been proved to occasion the death of more of our fellow-countrymen under twenty years of age, wherever its

influence has prevailed, than in ordinary circumstances under forty. And more than all this, if more be necessary and must be told, it has succeeded in so far drying up the springs of natural affection, and perverting the very instincts of the human heart, that its selfish and insatiable abettors assert, with an air of confidence and triumph, that fathers and mothers are everywhere to be found in plenty, who are willing, eager, and importunate, to offer their own children to a toil of fifteen hours a day, at the price of a few paltry shillings at the end of such a week's work—as neither felon, transport, nor slave was ever known to perform. It has occasioned this awful change in the *natural* character—the change it has wrought in the moral character we cannot, dare not, trust ourselves to depict. But *you* know it—for unhappily you are first the unwary dupes, then the unwilling slaves, and at length the pitiable victims of a system, which, for the perpetration of wrong, and the infliction of misery, has no parallel in the annals of the human race. You are denounced as a dissolute and a degraded people—ignorant, dissatisfied, and refractory—not worthy to be entrusted even with the time necessary for recreation and repose, and only fit for a drudgery, which barely leaves you one hour out of the twenty-four, for all the higher duties and nobler avocations of life. Having first reduced you to the most abject condition to which man can be brought, the wealthy masters of the mill become the base calumniators of those, whose misery, wretchedness, and crime, are chiefly chargeable upon themselves. You have bent your shoulders at their bidding, and they have not been slow to heap on the burden. But the load has grown too heavy to be borne. It must, and shall be shaken off. You can stand it no longer, and there is no reason why you should. There are many reasons, and very good reasons too, why you should *not*. Forbearance, once a virtue—and nobly you have displayed

it—has now become a crime. Rise up to your work, and rouse yourselves for action. We, your delegates, have done our duty. We have listened to no overture, accepted no compromise—and made no surrender. We have told one and the same tale always, and everywhere. We have demanded in your name, and on your behalf, a good and effective Ten Hours' Bill for all your children, and, consequently, for yourselves—the restriction being laid on the moving power. We have succeeded in beating back the insidious advances of Poulett Thomson, intended only to be the prelude of a series of still further encroachments and aggressions upon the residue of your too often, and too much diminished rights. We have come back victorious in this, in spite of open foes and rotten friends—ministers, masters, tyrant tories, pretended reformers, treacherous allies, and immoderate enemies, have opposed their united strength in vain. But we have *not* got, and they say we shall never have the Ten Hours' Bill. We say we will either have *that*, or something else, a great deal *more*, and a good deal *better*—and what say *you?*" The "something better," referred to was expressed in a resolution of the central committee, asking the factory operatives to offer to their opponents the alternative of the adults ceasing to work with the children at the close of eight hours, or the parliament enacting a ten hours' factory law. An alternative clearly impracticable ; anything short of law would have failed to produce uniformity in the hours of labour in factories, but the resolution and the address bear evidence to the earnestness and determination of the factory operatives.

This address was received with approval. Public and delegates' meetings were held, and the organisation for the purposes of watching the operation of the Act, and moving public opinion on the question, remained in full force.

A circumstance occurred near to this time which caused

much commotion, and has been a source of some misapprehension, in and out of parliament; it has to the principal actor, from opponents, been a cause of abuse and condemnation. The facts were as follow: Mr Oastler was, by the Short-time Committee of Blackburn, invited to that town for the purpose of addressing a meeting to be held in the theatre, on the 15th of September, 1836, on the factory question. Notwithstanding the pledge of the government that the then existing Factory Act should be enforced, on Mr Oastler's arrival in Blackburn he was informed by the Short-time Committee, "that a few days ago the magistrates at Blackburn, in reply to a complaint under the factory law, had from the bench been refused a hearing. At the same time they declared, 'Oh, that is Oastler's law; we have nothing to do with it; take your complaints to him,' thus dismissing the complainants." Having ascertained the truth of that statement, Mr Oastler went to the public meeting in the theatre. It was crowded; in one of the boxes to his left sat those magistrates and several millowners known as opponents to the law; they were pointed out to Mr Oastler, who, in the course of his address, directed his observations to that portion of his audience. He told them, as above stated, what he had heard, and pointedly asked them, "Is that true?" They were silent, and laughed at the speaker. Many voices shouted, "It is true; they know it," and so forth. After these interruptions had subsided, Mr Oastler spoke to the magistrates to the following effect—"Your silence, after my public appeal to you, and after the declarations of your neighbours in your hearing, convinces me that I have not been misinformed. You say that the law is mine; I say that it is the law of the land which you have sworn to enforce. If you do not regard your oaths, and if the King of England has not the power to enforce the law, why, then, it becomes my duty to explain in your hearing how you stand before

the law. You are regardless of your oaths, you are persons holding property, your only title being the law of the land. Now, if the law of the land, intended to protect the lives of the factory children, is to be disregarded, and there is to be no power to enforce it; it becomes my duty, as the guardian of the factory children, to enquire whether, in the eye of the law of England, their lives or your spindles are most entitled to the law's protection. If the King has not the power to enforce the factory law, I must and I will strive to force even you to enforce that law." Then, turning to the audience, Mr Oastler said, "If, after this, your magistrates should refuse to listen to your complaints under the factory act, and again refer you to me, bring with you your children, and tell them to ask their grandmothers for a few of their old knitting-needles, which I will instruct them how to apply to the spindles in a way which will teach these law-defying, mill-owner magistrates to have respect even to 'Oastler's law,' as they have wrongly designated the factory law."

Mr Oastler followed up this declaration with a series of observations on the necessity of obedience to the law; assuring his hearers that his threat should remain on record, and urging the magistrates and millowners to consider their own responsibilities, and beware of disobeying the law.

The Blackburn newspapers contained an imperfect condensation of Mr Oastler's address, from which the *Manchester Guardian* selected a few lines containing Mr Oastler's threat, but entirely omitted any reference to the conduct of the magistrates, of which Mr Oastler complained. The editor appended to the obnoxious paragraph a series of animadversions on the character of Mr Oastler. He replied to the remarks of the editor and defended himself. The editor inserted Mr Oastler's defence, and appended thereto the editor's own remarks, to which Mr Oastler replied—that reply having been refused insertion, Mr Oastler felt it

necessary to publish the whole correspondence in a pamphlet entitled *The Law or the Needle*, which, when published, caused a great sensation. The principle maintained by Mr Oastler and plainly stated in his speech, was simply this—The lives of the factory children were as much entitled to protection under the law as the property of their employers; if the latter defied the law passed expressly to protect the lives of the factory children, and the government failed to enforce the law, then, the question was, made by the magistrates themselves, one of power between the contending parties; and it became the duty of the factory children to use every possible and necessary agency at their command in their own defence, in support of their lives and the law, and against the law-breakers, for, as Mr Oastler pithily observed—"Where there is no law there is no property."

Towards the close of 1836, several important public meetings were held, principally to encourage the operatives to be vigilant in their efforts to secure obedience to the law, and to show the advantages of a ten hours' bill. One of the most important of these gatherings was at Oldham; the principal speakers were the late Mr John Fielden, one of the members representing that borough in parliament, Mr Charles Hindley, M.P. for Ashton, Mr Oastler, and Mr Stephens. At this meeting grave complaints were made of the conduct of certain magistrates failing to enforce the law. On the question of the improvement in machinery, Mr Fielden stated that he had recently made a calculation of the increased power of manufacturing production, and discovered that ten persons could in 1836 produce as much cloth as one hundred persons could have done in 1796, yet then they had the carding engine, the roving billy, and spinning jenny. If he were to revert to the time of carding by hand upon stocks, and spinning upon one spindle, the increase of the powers of production had no doubt been an hundredfold. On this occasion Mr Fielden expressed his opinion

on the relations of employers and employed; he maintained that it was "the duty of employers, whether for operations on land, or with the jenny and the shuttle, to take care that the labourers were well fed, clothed, and sheltered, in consideration of moderate labour." At this meeting the question of foreign competition in its connection with the hours of labour was fully considered; the opinions of the speakers are expressed in the subjoined proposition—"Whatever contributes to lower prices between rival manufacturers at home, contributes to increase foreign competition; long hours of labour contribute to lower prices in the home market, and, for that reason, to increase foreign competition." The soundness of this proposition rested upon the fact that foreign competitors in the branches of manufacture, under the operation of factory law, adjusted their prices to the scale of those of British manufacturers. It was maintained, that foreign trade was barter, and the profit to England depended upon the relative quantity and quality of the articles exchanged; that the effect of low prices was to increase the quantity exported, without increasing, in a like proportion, the quantity imported; that long hours of labour reduced prices to the injury of the home producer, and the benefit of the foreign consumer; that to reduce and regulate the hours of labour would tend to increase the value of British produce given in exchange for foreign commodities. This argument was based upon Mr Fielden's practical experience in trade, and after mature consideration pronounced by Mr Hindley to be sound. Mr Hindley's words were:—"The natural and necessary consequence of a limitation of hours would be to lessen the quantity of goods produced, and lead to a rise in the prices of commodities. A restriction of products advanced the prices of the most material article of our exports; a corresponding rise in the value of imports would ensue, and the effects of the higher value of commodities would fall on the whole people. On these grounds

it was just to conclude that a diminution of the time of working would be a benefit to the operatives."

The most remarkable speech was that of Mr Stephens. Alluding to Mr Hindley the speaker said :—"As the honourable member has declared that on this question he will know neither rich nor poor, neither friend nor foe, I wish to call his attention to the facts I have stated, all of which have transpired in his immediate neighbourhood. Here is a key [Mr Stephens exhibited a house-key] which the millowner compels the operative spinner to receive, so soon as he enters the millowner's employ, and for which he deducts three shillings or three shillings and sixpence a week from this operative's wages, no matter whether he be married or single, householder or lodger. If he be in lodgings, so much the better for the master, who then gives him the key of a house already tenanted, by which means he receives two and sometimes three rents at the one and the same time. Now this practice is notorious. But where is there a man of station and influence who is bold enough to expose it and denounce it as it deserves." The above extract makes known a discreditable means of acquiring riches, and one which, at the time referred to, was frequent, and well deserved the exposure it received at the hands of Mr Stephens.

Mr Oastler, in a speech delivered with much solemnity, took occasion to revert to the new phase in the movement caused by the declaration of the Blackburn magistrates, "that they would not regard the factory law," and warned those law-defying magistrates of their danger, should they persist in their illegal course. Mr Fielden said, in reference thereto,—"Mr Oastler had pointedly put the question, 'What were the people to do when the laws cease to exist?' When laws were set at nought, they might be said to have ceased to be ; and the best constitutional writers had told us, that when laws were disregarded and oppression was carried

to an extent not to be endured, it was right that resistance should ensue, and resistance, at such a period, became a virtue."

The reports of the meetings on the factory question had the average circulation in newspapers, and were usually published in pamphlets or placards, and circulated in great numbers; copies were forwarded to all the more active public men of the time, without distinction of creed or party. Mr Oastler's pen was in constant use, and many letters written by him on the question were widely circulated. His talent and money were applied without reservation to what, in his own words, was then the object of his life,— "the release of the factory operatives from bondage." The constant use of the press was a powerful lever, and could not fail ultimately to produce a change.

CHAPTER VIII.

IMPORTANT PUBLIC MEETING IN LEEDS, 1837—PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT IN 1838.

It is said that Coleridge, whose opposition to many modern propositions was no secret, when on one occasion strongly pressed by a political economist of the Benthamite school, on the "dangerous tendencies" of the opinions the philosophical poet had maintained in conversation, answered his opponent by taking up the down of a thistle which lay by the roadside, "and holding it up, said, after observing the direction in which it was borne by the wind: the tendency of that thistle is towards China, but I know with assured certainty that it will never get there; nay, that it is more than probable that, after sundry eddyings and gyrations up and down, backwards and forwards, that it will be found somewhere near the place in which it grew." We have been frequently reminded of this interesting incident, when observing the pertinacity with which theorists maintain their favourite tenets, and enlarge with copious eloquence on the dangerous tendency of measures, which, in themselves, are by those in want of them, felt to be undeniably necessary. The necessity for further legislation for factories had been so fully demonstrated, that objectors were forced to lay aside their former pleas in opposition, and take refuge in an exposition of the dangerous tendency of such legislation. On this head they were indeed verbose and energetic, they too

were, as usual, prophetic, and foretold the most calamitous results, which, on their authority, were certain to overtake the unfortunate factory workers, who, in their ignorance, had invoked the protection of the legislature. The factory workers, with what, in the eyes of their prophetic opponents, appeared to be a perverse blindness, clung to their favourite Ten Hours' Bill, and believed that it would, in practice, all tendencies notwithstanding, settle down somewhere near to where it had originated, and contribute, as intended by its promoters, towards the improvement of all practically employed in factory labour.

Dean Swift, in his imaginary travels, has been careful to impress on his readers, the folly and danger of relying too confidently on the authority of those who assume to be, beyond all others, "scientific statesmen." When Gulliver was among the practical Lilliputians, and in want of garments, by a very simple process of measurement and the help of an old shirt, they succeeded in fitting him exactly. When the renowned traveller was cast among the learned and abstruse Laputans, whose whole time was devoted to a consideration of tendencies and abstract principles, "passionately disputing every inch of a party opinion," he was again in want of the tailor's assistance. "Those," says he, "to whom the king had entrusted me, observing how ill I was clad, ordered a tailor to come next morning, and take measure for a suit of clothes. This operator did his office after a different manner from those of his trade in Europe. He first took my latitude by a quadrant, and then, with rule and compasses, described the dimensions and outlines of my whole body, all of which he entered upon paper; and in six days brought my clothes very ill made, and quite out of shape, by happening to mistake a figure in the calculation." The factory operatives were in like condition. They had been legislated for after the most approved fashion, they had been measured by

gentlemen sent from Downing street on purpose, in defiance of all expostulations, the garments had been made, but as even more than one figure had been mistaken in the calculation, they were felt, in wear, to be troublesome and vexatious. The operatives and their friends were by no means satisfied with the alternative of "Be content with what you have, or go naked," they believed that they were good judges of the troubles they endured, and were enabled to point out some of the mistakes which the somewhat pretentious mathematical tailors had committed.

In modern politics, compromise is the order of the day. When there exists on a public question of interest considerable dissatisfaction, and the opposing parties are strenuous and energetic, there usually arises a party anxious for a settlement, and prepared to recommend "a middle course." The idea of moderation is agreeable to the minds of many, and concession is regarded as being so amiable and desirable, that to be stubborn is, in many circles, considered to be fitting ground for political excommunication. The most popular statesman of the age built his reputation on concessions; the late Sir Robert Peel, when nominally a tory, was dearer to the liberals than to his own followers; his concessions were so many and important that the amiable politician recruited his party by agreeable accommodation, and conciliated his opponents by doing their work more rapidly and efficiently than it was in their power to do it for themselves. In all the leading questions of his age, the late Sir Robert Peel was the highest practical authority on both sides. Now against Catholic Emancipation, Reform in Parliament, and Free Trade, then for Catholic Emancipation, Reform in Parliament, and Free Trade, no other captain knew so well how to trim his sails to the wind: the merits of concession were measured by the obstinacy of former opposition, and the anxiety of the popular party for success. Every successful man, no matter in what position of life,

has a host of imitators. Does a quack doctor grow rich by filling coffins, then, there is a brood of the same species busy in every village, the more talented and ambitious become *professional*, the humbler sort work on in the peddling way most congenial to their habits. Does an expert politician ruin fame and confidence by acting in the spirit of compromise, then all the smaller fry ape him in his practice. Have you an energetic Irishman, ripe and ready in eloquence and repartee, devoting respectable talents to continuous agitation, then, you will have in almost every parish a mimic orator, but possessing neither the honesty, the talent, nor singleness of purpose of the original. Does a poet of great power and striking faculties of illustration arise, then, all the little fledglings begin to chirp after the like fashion, and some among the little critics praise the imitators almost indiscriminately. Imitation is an epidemic ; once begun, it runs its course, obeys the same laws irrespective of class; it is practically the same from emperors to beggars, in the age of witchcraft and in that of steam; and knows no limit, from the search for the philosopher's stone to a sincere belief in spirit-rapping. In politics, it is apt to become extravagant and useless by flattering vanity to its bent, and encouraging the meretricious rather than the modest and useful talents of ordinary men.

On the 9th of November, 1837, a public meeting was held in the Court House, Leeds, intended, by its promoters, to settle the factory question by a compromise in favour of an eleven hours' bill. In a question so thoroughly agitated as had been factory regulation, it was by the supporters of the compromise felt to be necessary to try to win public favour, otherwise there could not be entertained any reasonable hopes for success. The meeting was called at two o'clock, a most inconvenient hour for working-men ; the only notice having been a brief advertisement in the columns of the *Leeds Mercury*, and a few small bills posted in Leeds.

Between the publication of the *Mercury* and the time of meeting, there were four days. So alive were the factory workers to their interests, so complete their organization, that though the notice of meeting had been limited and obscure, by two o'clock on Thursday the 9th, the day for which the meeting was called, the Leeds Court House was crowded to excess, and delegates were present from every manufacturing town in Yorkshire and most towns in Lancashire. The Mayor occupied the chair. Mr Wrigglesworth, of Leeds, introduced the principal proposition to be considered, in the form of a resolution for an eleven hours' bill. Mr Wrigglesworth stated that the existing law was unsatisfactory, and that the interests of masters and workmen would be promoted by an eleven hours' bill. Mr Joshua Hobson, of Leeds, met the resolution of Mr Wrigglesworth by an amendment, deprecating any change in the existing law, beyond the limitation of the working hours of young persons to ten per day. The attention of the meeting was intense,—each man seemed to feel that an important moment had arrived. The Rev. Mr Stephens rose to address the meeting—he was received with approbation. This speech is a complete study of the kind of eloquence of which he was master. He regretted the mournful truth that the workman and his employer had been in conflict, which he hoped would be changed to concert. He raised the meeting in importance, seized aptly on all the circumstances of weight, and arrayed them in their order. He maintained that the meeting was a conference of millowers, overlookers, and operatives to deliberate on the interests of all, that their decision would instruct the members representing the borough in parliament, these the legislature, and ultimately affect the law. Thus far, all was conciliation; the astute orator hinted at the short notice calling the assembly—"Some might have thought it advisable in those calling this meeting, to publish their call in the leading journals

of the country; this might have been considered necessary in ordinary cases and on ordinary subjects; but it would appear that when the people of Leeds came to consider the subject, it was deemed by them one of that kind that would be communicated with the rapidity of the whirlwind or lightning through every part of the empire; that they thought it merely necessary to whisper in Leeds, that the meeting would be holden, when the four winds of heaven would carry that whisper to the remotest part of the country, and as they carried it, would cause it to swell like the rolling peal of thunder before it reached its termination in the final crash. I am happy to inform you that such has been the case. I am not complaining of the omission, for the address has accomplished *more than its intention!*" Mr Stephens described the effect of the address in his own district. All felt how momentous was the question to be decided. He then appealed to the nature of the evidence already known on the subject of factory labour; showed that the proposition of the promoters of that meeting was opposed to known and oft-corroborated evidence; and to work children to the certain injury of their health, he denounced as being "political, social, moral, and physical murder." He continued:—"The cause which has brought us together, is the fact that the monster, steam power, in the hands of its brother monster, capital, enables the capitalist to dictate to his workman, the latter not being a voluntary agent in the transaction—how many hours he shall work—which enables the capitalist to dictate what wages the workman shall take; which enables him, by a combination with other capitalists, to depress the energies of industry, to throw the chains of bondage around the necks of human beings, and to bring millions of Englishmen to accept, at their hands, just so much time for reading, and eating, and sleeping, and recreation, and just so much wages as they choose to allow, and all this is the result of a simple

combination of steam power, and money power, with human power. This is the question which must be met to-day in such a manner as for ever to preclude the necessity of further parliamentary interference. This we are convinced can alone be done by considering this question as one of humanity—as one which involves every principle of morality and religion —and after it has been thus considered, to base upon the premises thus laid down such a superstructure as to produce harmony and peace, reconciliation and happiness amongst all classes of the community." From this foundation Mr Stephens continued to address his hearers at great length, dexterously introducing every popular topic connected with the actual condition of the working-man, and likely to tell with effect against the Malthusian and free-trade political economists; rising with the impetuous feeling which he poured into the meeting, as from an ever-flowing spring, he impersonated their wrongs, their rights, their sympathies, and resolution, declaring that "before children eight years of age shall be allowed to go into a factory for the purpose of unnatural and killing labour, before they shall cross the threshold of a mill to be murdered, the door-posts shall come down! Before they shall enter underneath the roof, the roof shall be untopped, and the walls themselves shall be levelled with the foundations." To talk of compromise, to men of the temper, resolution, and eloquence of Mr Stephens was absurd; they had resolved on victory, and would turn neither to the left nor the right. The amendment for a Ten Hours' Bill was declared carried by a decided majority. Mr Stephens' reputation for violence and control over the masses was enhanced among the Yorkshire millowners. Mr Baines, M.P. for Leeds, and the government were very distinctly informed that only one measure would satisfy the factory operatives; with a continuous disregard for the 'dangerous tendency of restrictive legislation," they were resolved on obtaining from parliament a Ten Hours' Act.

In the course of the proceedings the Mayor, because of other important business, vacated the chair, which was subsequently occupied by Mr Baines, who, on behalf of the meeting, signed petitions, one to each house of parliament, and founded on the resolution in support of the Ten Hours' Bill. One hand only was held up against the adoption of these petitions, a circumstance which proved to demonstration the unanimity of the factory operatives on what, to them, was the question of all others important.

While this was the temper of the factory operatives and their acknowledged leaders, the factory inspectors were in their reports complaining of their inability to enforce the law; the government received the remonstrances of the inspectors, but failed to adopt requisite means to insure obedience. Under the factories' act magistrates had the power to mitigate penalties following conviction. To such an extent was this privilege indulged, that to violate the law was a common and a profitable practice. In the words of one of the factory inspectors, "The disreputable mill-owner, who is regardless of the discredit of a prosecution for violating the law, solely made for the protection of helpless children, looks only to the amount of penalty imposed on his neighbours, and on casting up the account he discovers that it is far more profitable to disobey than to observe the act,"—a statement fully borne out by the returns of the number of convictions and the fines imposed: thus between May the 1st, 1836, and January the 1st, 1837, there were 822 convictions; the average of penalties was 2*l.* 5s. The average of penalties for 1837 was 1*l.* 10s., thus exhibiting a rapidly decreasing scale. To break the law was profitable, and to be convicted for its violation was not considered in the least disgraceful among those millowners who opposed factory legislation. The frequent and profitable violation of the Factories' Act was a circumstance used by a portion of the press, which aimed at proving, that all such legislation was

absurd, and, in evidence of their proposition, pointed to the inability of the government to command obedience to the law. In the expressive words of Lord Ashley: "Was it then surprising that there should be discontent and dissatisfaction among the operatives in the manufacturing districts, when they saw that the law which had been passed for the protection of young children was daily violated, not only with impunity but also with advantage to the rich, but with tremendous consequences to the poor? Could parliament be surprised that these men thought that it was inclined to legislate for the richer in opposition to the poorer classes, and that, as a necessary consequence, they held in equal contempt the makers of the law, the administrators of the law, and the law itself?" Not any words could more correctly express the feelings of the operative classes of the north. It was well for the House of Commons to be thus plainly informed of the result which followed from their own negligence; the spirit of Mr Oastler, Mr Bull, and Mr Stephens was thus re-echoed in the House of Commons, strengthened indeed and dignified by the position of the speaker, but clearly bearing towards the same end—the necessity for equal justice to all, and the danger to be apprehended from the practice of magistrates and statesmen disregarding the law of the land and the feelings of the poor. There exists at all times, in the minds of those who have no direct power in the enactment of the laws, a latent desire to complain of their partiality in operation which trifling circumstances are apt to warm into active life. A wise and a strong government is careful to prevent, on so delicate a point, unnecessary scandal. The whig government of 1837 was neither wise nor strong; its promises were large, its performances small; its vacillation and weakness contributed to bring into disrepute the very foundations of government, and to prepare the way for that outburst of popular discontent in 1839, which only subsided after several severe state

prosecutions, the expatriation of some and the incarceration of many of "the democratic leaders of the people."

All this was opposed to the intention of ministers, but it was inseparable from their acts; they hoped to perpetuate their rule by the conciliation of capitalists rather than labourers, an effort at all times dangerous, but hazardous beyond calculation, when followed in violation of the laws of the land, and the spirit of equity. That the whig ministers of 1837 were ignorant of the fatal effects of their own trifling with the factories' act, is no doubt true, but effects follow causes without respect for the blindness of their authors; the spendthrift may in a moment of mental delusion sign away his patrimony, but the folly of the act will not save him from poverty and neglect. The whig government, by pandering to the interests of millowners in violation of the law, loosened the bonds of society, by weakening the regard in the minds of many, for the majesty of the law; the partial and timid conduct of the government in the matter of factory legislation afforded to every one disposed to use it, a ready illustration of the maxim, "The law itself follows gold." There were not wanting those willing agents who knew how to apply that maxim with effect, on the minds of the multitude.

On June the 22nd, 1838, Lord Ashley formally brought the factory question, at the request of the factory operatives, under the notice of the House of Commons, by moving the second reading of the Factories' Regulation Bill as an amendment on a government measure relating to Irish tithes. Lord Ashley charged the government with having deluded him by false promises, with having pledged themselves to bring in an effective measure, and with having failed to redeem their pledges. The government were hardly pressed, in the debate which followed, especially by Sir Robert Peel, who though "not prepared to support the ten hours' clause of his noble friend (Lord Ashley), this he most certainly

was prepared to assert, that if the arguments of the right honourable gentleman opposite (Mr Poulett Thomson) were good for anything, they went to show that the factory question was the one subject with which it was the imperative duty of parliament to deal, and without a moment's delay. If the interests of humanity were at stake, then surely no one would say that there ought to be any delay. If the right honourahle gentleman were right, on that ground then did he (Sir Robert Peel) call upon the House of Commons to apply themselves to the question forthwith." The division very distinctly indicated the feeling of the house and the state of parties.

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This defeat of Lord Ashley was almost equivalent to success. It was clear as the sun at noon-day, that to evade the factory question was impossible. The promptitude and activity of his lordship were beyond all praise; certainly not any leader could have done more for his clients than did his lordship. The respect and attention he commanded, in the House of Commons, were outward and visible signs too marked to be misunderstood by ministers; he renewed his assault against the government by again bringing the factory question under the attention of parliament, on July the 20th.

The speech of Lord Ashley on this occasion was one of the ablest we remember to have heard or read on the factory question. He, from public documents sanctioned by the authority of the factory inspectors, convicted the government either of an unwillingness or inability to insure obedience to the factory act of their own approval. As a masterly array of facts and arguments, his lordship's speech produced great effect in the House of Commons, which was

much increased by the speaker's ability to pourtray, from observation in Manchester, the wretched social condition of the factory operatives. At this period, Lord Ashley had made the factory question thoroughly his own; he was in correspondence with millowners and operatives; in brief, men of all ranks and classes, at home and abroad, interested in the factory question, looked up to his lordship as the leader of the ten hours' bill movement; and interest in the factory question had, within a comparatively few years, spread from Fixby Hall and the West Riding of Yorkshire to the closets of thoughtful authors and the minds of enlightened statesmen throughout Europe, an apt illustration of which was brought under the attention of the House of Commons by the noble lord; he said—"The interest which this question excited was not confined to England, it had extended to France, where it had been discussed in the chamber of deputies, and had engaged the eloquent pens of some of the ablest writers of the country—M. Sismondi and others—who had not disdained to support the cause of the helpless children in France and Switzerland. He had received within the last fortnight a communication from France, requesting him to join in a general society to wipe out this blot from the civilization of Christian Europe, in the propriety of which he heartily concurred. He had hoped that this country would have been the first to set the example of such an association, and he felt ashamed that another country, possessing advantages so much inferior, should have anticipated it in setting on foot a general scheme for the amelioration of the condition of infant labourers."

As if to prevent the possibility of any hope of compromise, Lord Ashley assured the house that the question was not in any sense a party question; without regard to political parties, he, and those who supported him, were resolved on success; so flagrant were the violations of the law, so strong the sense of the country in defence

of the rights of humanity, that "if he should hold his peace, the very stones would immediately cry out;" and concluded a most convincing and manly speech with an appeal to the house "to decide whether they would amend, or repeal, or enforce the Act now in existence; but if they would do none of these things, if they continued idly indifferent, and obstinately shut their eyes to this great and growing evil, if they would give no heed to the fierce and rapid cancer that was gnawing the very vitals of the social system; if they were careless of the growth of an immense population, plunged in ignorance and vice, which neither feared God nor regarded man, then he warned them that they must be prepared for the very worst results that could befal an empire. Then would that great and terrible prophecy have its second completion—'Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever.' The noble lord concluded by moving a resolution—"That this house deeply regrets that the law affecting the regulation of the labour of children in factories, having been found imperfect, and ineffective to the purpose for which it was passed, has been suffered to continue so long without any amendment."

The discussion which followed did not evolve any material point of importance; the facts of Lord Ashley were unanswerable, and the opposition was confined to a repetition of prophecies, resting on the danger of restricting the hours of labour. Among these gloomy prophets was Mr O'Connell, who, amidst the cheers of the free-trade political economists, solemnly assured the house, that under the operation of a Ten Hours' Bill, "the Belgians, with cheap bread and no corn laws, would undersell British merchants in the market, Manchester would become a place of tombs, the children would be turned out of the factories, and the manufacturers cast on the poor laws."

On a division taking place, the numbers for going into committee of supply were, 121; for Lord Ashley's amendment, 106: majority against the amendment, 15.

The tergiversation of Mr O'Connell on the factory question was the cause of much complaint and dissatisfaction; certainly Mr O'Connell's speech and vote were directly opposed to all he had said at the London Tavern meeting in 1833. The speech of Lord Ashley, on the contrary, was read with delight; and his words, condemnatory of the conduct of the government, were often quoted with approval, and very materially served to strengthen the disgust of many among the working-men at the discreditable faithlessness and weakness of the ministry, and their evident preference for the millowners over the operatives. His lordship's rank was to him a source of power which, united with popular support, placed him on a pedestal, and which bade fair to elevate him above most of the statesmen of the time. He had spoken in a tone so decided on the duties of government and the relation which existed between the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor, as to warrant the hope that at least one statesman would endeavour to identify moral principle and British law. Mr Oastler, Mr Bull, and Mr Stephens were the exponents of the doctrines in the country on law and property, which Lord Ashley communicated to the ear of the House of Commons. This agreement in principle and policy mutually increased the power of all. Mr Oastler said, "Where there is no law there is no property;" Mr Bull, "The rich and the poor are equal in the eye of God, and ought to be in that of the law;" Mr Stephens, "He who makes war against the labourer's rights is the enemy of man, and a rebel against the tenth commandment;" Mr Fielden, "Laws set at nought may be said to have ceased to exist, and resistance then becomes a virtue;" Lord Ashley, "Could parliament be surprised that the

operatives of the manufacturing districts thought that it (the parliament) was inclined to legislate for the richer in opposition to the poorer classes, and that as a necessary consequence they (the operatives) held in equal contempt the makers of the law, the administrators of the law, and the law itself?"

CHAPTER IX.

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT IN 1839 AND 1840.—POLITICAL EXCITEMENT.—POPULAR DISCONTENT.—DISSOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE determination and untiring energy of Lord Ashley had won for him the sincere and enthusiastic approval of the factory operatives. The whig ministry, of which Lord Melbourne was the head, possessed, in a remarkable degree, the unwillingness for action which distinguishes authority in weak hands. It is reasonable to suppose that it would be for the welfare of society, and for the honour of ministers, that they should institute measures because they are required for the country's good, rather than wait until public opinion force parliament to legislate. Such, however, is not the rule, and, consequently, the slow growth of the ministerial mind on the factory question is not matter of surprise. It was felt by ministers to be a necessity to make another effort towards the adjustment of the factory question, otherwise, Lord Ashley would probably become on that question supreme, and the opposition would profit from further ministerial delay.

The year 1839 will be long remembered by the active politicians of this age, and when the history of the present age shall be faithfully written, that year will be marked as among the most important of the first half of the present century.

The greater portion of the more active of the working classes, weary of the professions of politicians of the liberal school, and disgusted with their practices, particularly as embodied in the New Poor Law Amendment Act, had betaken themselves to political agitation. Throughout England, Scotland, and Wales public meetings were of frequent occurrence, and the agitation on behalf of *The People's Charter* was rapidly accelerated. That document was the joint production of the late Mr Hume, the late Mr O'Connell, Mr Roebuck, Mr Hindley, and others. A respect for the law has been, in the education of every Englishman, predominant, and the circumstances which could change that respect, even transiently, were not trifling. In the earlier period of the chartist agitation, it was customary to appeal to ancient authority in support of universal or manhood suffrage; latterly this ground was abandoned, and the shibboleth was: "The charter peaceably, if we can; forcibly, if we must." This was the rule, there were very many who were opposed to physical force, but the extreme party were sufficiently numerous and powerful to create very considerable alarm in the minds of ministers. The late Mr Feargus O'Connor, the acknowledged head of the chartist party, was a man of great energy, a rapid and ready speaker, he was in the strength of manhood, and possessed a commanding bearing. He was aristocratic in manner, the descendant of an ancient, honoured, and persecuted Irish family; his influence over the working men was great, and rapidly on the increase. Mr O'Connor had been reared in the school of Irish agitation, and possessed that floating recklessness, which is, in part, inseparable from a political agitator; fed by the events of the hour, he was ambitious of popularity, and not scrupulous as to the sacrifices he made for its attainment. In passing, it is but just to observe that Mr O'Connor's intellect and stores of knowledge, did not improve with

his years. When first in the House of Commons he was checked by men at least his equals in talent and knowledge; and he had regard for his standing as a politician and a gentleman. When he became the popular leader of working-men, his popularity gave him the choice of his colleagues, who were, with rare exceptions, subservient to his desires, and to none was his absolutism more injurious than to himself, for not any man stood more thoroughly in need of that kind of training which conflict with equals and superiors can alone give. When Mr O'Connor entered on English agitation, he was far from being a vulgar demagogue; he was among the last of that class of Irish orators who made agitation a business and hatred of the English government a profession; he possessed that kind of oratorical talent necessary for successful platform speech-making, and he seemed to rely on it to serve him on all occasions, and for all purposes; as a writer he was irregular and diffuse, but strong in denunciation, which, with his readers, was the principal commodity in demand. He was frank and bold, and under better training than an anti-tithe agitation in Ireland, and a desultory political warfare in England, might have been, in parliament, a man of mark; to considerable talent and fine physical power, he inherited from his father, a manly generosity of heart. In 1839, that political agitation of which Mr O'Connor was the head, was the terror of the Melbourne administration, and the absorbent of a deeply-seated discontent. The leaders of the Ten Hours' Bill movement, satisfied with past labours, and determined that their object should stand apart from the political commotion of the time, made no public effort, but continued, with unabated attention, to watch with interest the difficulties of the government, so far as factory regulation was concerned. It is noteworthy that at the public meetings in support of *The People's Charter*, the speakers were wont to

allude to the New Poor Law, as one of their greatest grievances; they marked the Ten Hours' Bill with their special approbation.

On February 15th, 1839, a Factories' Act Amendment Bill, prepared by the government, was brought under the notice of the House of Commons. On February the 29th, Mr Fox Maule (now Lord Panmure), then Home Secretary, moved the second reading. The proposed alterations were, that no child should work in more than one factory in any one day, additional powers to factory inspectors in checking certificates of age, and increased stringency in granting them; "any regular surgeon would still be allowed to grant a certificate, but a certificate granted by any other than the regular certifying surgeon, would be of no avail until countersigned by a magistrate, not being a millowner, who should further ascertain the truth of the certificate, and the identity of the child brought before him. The certificate should be given at the factory where the child, or young person, was employed, that the inspector, or sub-inspector, should have the power to annul any certificate, where they had reason to believe that the real age of the child was less than the age specified." It was proposed to abolish the right, on the part of mill-occupiers, to recover lost time, "except where the machinery was moved by water-power, nor even then, except when the loss should arise from the total stoppage of the water-wheel from the want of water." Mr Fox Maule admitted that "the existing schooling clauses were not only inconvenient, but almost entirely useless;" in the proposed bill, it was suggested that "two hours of each day should be devoted to education."

In the debate which followed, Lord Ashley claimed the measure as a justification of his past efforts. Not

any petitions were presented from either masters or workmen, a circumstance so unprecedented in the factory question, as to be subject of remark. On July 1st, Mr Fox Maule moved, "That the house resolve itself into a committee on the Factories' Regulation Bill." In the debate which then followed, some important facts were elicited. The population employed in factories, under the factory law, numbered 419,590, of which, 242,296, or $57\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., were females. The penalties paid under the Act, were stated by the late Mr Brotherton to have been, for the year 1838, 8,300*l.*, and it was notorious that the inspectors could not prevent young children from being overworked. In the government bill, the limit of the age to which its clauses applied, was eighteen; and Mr Brotherton proposed twenty-one, on which amendment the ayes were 49; noes, 55. Lord Ashley proposed to strike out the words in the bill which excepted silk-mills from its operation: ayes, 69; noes, 58: majority for the amendment, 11. These minorities and majorities show the state of the question in the house. On July 26th, the order of the day for the further consideration of the report on the Factories' Bill having been read, Lord John Russell informed the house, "that in consequence of Lord Ashley having declared his intention of opposing the bill, if it were not extended to silk mills, he, Lord John Russell, had determined to withdraw the bill." This withdrawal of a government measure was an acknowledgment of ministerial weakness, and of Lord Ashley's strength in opposition. Lord Ashley had been the leader of the factory question when public meetings in the country, factory delegates in London, and numerous petitions to parliament, gave to his efforts encouragement and prestige; he was equally vigilant when there was not a petition in his favour.

The Melbourne administration appeared willing that Lord

Ashley should, to some extent, take the management of the measure. His lordship, without opposition, on March 3rd, 1840, moved—"That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the operation of the act for the regulation of mills and factories, and to report thereon to the house." Mr Hindley seconded the motion, which was agreed to. On August the 4th, Lord Ashley moved—"That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to direct an inquiry to be made into the employment of the children of the poorer classes in mines and collieries, and in the various branches of trade and manufacture in which numbers of children work together, not being included in the provisions of the Act for regulating the employment of children and young persons in mills and factories, and to collect information as to the ages at which they are employed, the number of hours they are engaged in work, the time allowed each day for meals, and as to the actual state, condition, and treatment of such children, and as to the effects of such employment, both with regard to their morals and their bodily health." The late Mr Brotherton seconded the motion, which was agreed to.

This resolution is evidence of the advancing influence of Lord Ashley on questions of social importance. While others were busy with a discussion on the forms of government, his lordship was alive to its duties, and was taking the preparatory steps necessary for showing to statesmen the condition of the labouring classes; and practically asking the former, to consider what they could do for the welfare of the multitude. The wisdom of this course was sanctioned by the experience of the times; for, while society was convulsed with political agitation, the facts and arguments used to illustrate what were called "political evils," were, in most cases, connected with the production and distribution

of riches; and the questions were constantly asked, "What has civilization done for working men? What share have they in the improvements of which the talking philosophers are so proud?" And appeals to the multitude were made in words expressing the sense condensed in the lines:

> "Art thou so bare, and full of wretchedness,
> And fearest to die? famine is in thy cheeks,
> Need and oppression starveth in thy eyes,
> Upon thy back hangs ragged misery;
> The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law:
> The world affords no law to make thee rich;
> Then be not poor, but break it, and take this."

A will, begotten by poverty, yielded a qualified but yet ominous approval. While the mind of the country was in this discontented and unsatisfactory mood, the Factory Act remained unchanged, and the parliamentary efforts of all parties were brought to a close by a dissolution of the House of Commons; the whig party having sunk in reputation and lost much of the popular respect which they had formerly commanded. It would have been impossible for any intelligent thinker to have surveyed, at this period, the social condition of England, without arriving at a judgment somewhat unfavourable to the character of British statesmen, or the theory of government. It is on the conditions under which the wealth of a nation is produced and distributed, that the comfort of a population directly depends; and forms of government ought to be considered in connection with their bearing on the wants of men. A government may be good in its constitution, and statesmen, from ignorance, may sanction laws injurious to the interests of the many, or from indolence and ignorance, fail to enact the laws required. A government bad in its constitution, because of a wise and prudent policy, conducted by wise statesmen, may rule over a happy and prosperous population. The

extreme section of political reformers argued, that the enactment of *The People's Charter* would lead to the most desirable social results. The excitement consequent on the agitation for that end, forced on the attention of men of all parties, the necessity of attending to the condition of the people, a consideration which had occupied the minds of the leaders of the Ten Hours' Bill movement for years, and the general neglect of which was a principal source of governmental difficulty.

CHAPTER X.

MR OASTLER'S DEPARTURE FROM FIXBY—IMPRISONMENT OF MR OASTLER AT THE INSTANCE OF THE LATE MR THORNHILL, OF RIDDLESWORTH, NORFOLK; THE EFFECT THEREOF ON THE PROGRESS OF THE FACTORY MOVEMENT.

THE factory movement lost much in Mr Oastler's imprisonment for debt, at the instance of his former employer, Thomas Thornhill, Esq., of Riddlesworth, in Norfolk, proprietor of the Fixby and other large estates in Yorkshire. Respect for Mr Oastler among rich and poor was increased by this circumstance, but his power of travel and talk was at an end. Public speaking is as necessary for success in agitation, as is the breeze to the mariner; and a movement can no more command an orator at will, than can a sailor the wind. "Imprisonment for debt," and "respect among rich and poor increased," are sentences which, at first sight, seem discordant,—in this case they were reconcileable.

The circumstances which led to Mr Oastler's appointment to a stewardship, the duties of which his father had faithfully discharged for nearly twenty years, and which were fulfilled by the son for a like period, are minutely detailed by Mr Oastler in *The Fleet Papers*. Without encumbering these pages with a recapitulation, it is enough that we remark that Mr Thornhill's estimation of the father's services induced him, unsolicited, to offer Mr Oastler the stewardship of the Yorkshire estates. This act on the part of Mr Thornhill

was conveyed in expressions relating to both father and son, which, to Mr Oastler's mind, increased the worth of the act manifold, and gave a weight to one declaration therein which made an impression that has never been obliterated. In allusion to Mr Thornhill's self-imposed absence from his Yorkshire estates (which continued during the whole period of Mr Oastler's stewardship), Mr Thornhill said—"I am, in some measure, compelled to leave my name, as well as my property, in the hands of my Yorkshire steward." To guard and improve that property, to sustain and increase respect and reverence for the name of Thornhill, in Yorkshire, were duties thus imposed and afterwards faithfully performed. During the period of Mr Oastler's connection with Mr Thornhill, there was manifested, on both sides, the strongest regard; and though Mr Oastler's public exertions were obnoxious to many persons in Yorkshire, who thought it desirable to make representations thereon to Mr Thornhill, these representations rather strengthened than diminished Mr Thornhill's respect for his steward. Mr Thornhill approved of Mr Oastler's private and public proceedings in the ten hours' movement, and, on one occasion, Mr Thornhill contributed 20*l.* to the funds of the operatives' Short Time Committee. Mr Oastler's knowledge and opinions, on questions of public interest, were so highly estimated by Mr Thornhill, that he felt anxious they should have influence in high quarters, and for that purpose, introduced Mr Oastler to the late Duke of Wellington, and the late Earl Grey (then Prime Minister), and other important aristocratic and political personages. With the late Duke of Wellington, Mr Oastler had many interviews, and was honoured by his grace with a request to "call at Apsley House when convenient." Mr Oastler corresponded with the late duke (at his own request) for several years, and his grace highly valued, and with punctuality replied to, the letters of his Yorkshire correspondent. The question of the new poor law was an exception

to the customary concordance in opinion between Mr Thornhill and Mr Oastler. On that question, Mr Oastler faithfully communicated his views to Mr Thornhill. For several years Mr Oastler's communications, by letter and conversation, were kindly received, and the discussions on the new poor law were continued in a most friendly manner. Mr Thornhill, while differing from Mr Oastler in opinion, did not attempt to dissuade him from the course he, on the poor-law question, was pursuing. Until, in 1838, the Poor Law Commissioners having resolved to introduce the new poor law into the Huddersfield and Halifax districts, and having found that Mr Oastler's influence was a barrier against their success, the late Mr Frankland Lewis, then the chief Poor Law Commissioner, wrote to Mr Thornhill, requesting his support to aid the commissioners to enforce the new poor law. He promised that aid, corresponded with Mr Oastler thereon, and having found him inexorable, on May the 29th, 1838, Mr Thornhill wrote to Mr Oastler, as follows. "I am sorry to say that I cannot employ you any longer as my steward, therefore, we must part. I wish you well for your own sake, and doubly so for that of your father."

Mr Oastler had not long entered upon the stewardship, before he discovered that the expenses attendant upon the faithful discharge of his duties, were much greater than the amount of his salary, that being 300*l.* a year, without a single perquisite. Mr Oastler was received by the gentry, and others, who were more or less connected with the estates, in the most hospitable manner, and when they called upon him, like hospitality was returned. In affairs relating to the church, turnpike roads, and other public works, in parochial as well as in county questions, Mr Thornhill, through Mr Oastler, was constantly advised with; on such matters many were the guests at Mr Oastler's table. The tenants were invariably received at Fixby Hall with hospitality, the poor were not sent

empty away. Mr Oastler had regard to Mr Thornhill's name, and thus it was that name was honoured. Mr Oastler received some legacies, and became possessed of other property, all of which he devoted in the above-named services. To make up his yearly balance with Mr Thornhill, Mr Oastler borrowed money from his friends; at length, he felt it to be his duty to explain these facts to Mr Thornhill, and to relinquish a situation, the necessary duties of which were involving him year by year in an increasing debt. On the 5th of June, 1834, Mr Oastler, by letter, communicated, in detail, the circumstances above referred to, assuring Mr Thornhill that so long as he (Mr Oastler) remained steward, he must reciprocate hospitality, and show kindness to the poor, and that "he could not live to be a simple money-getting, money-scraping, money-hoarding earthworm," and declared his inability any longer to bear the burden. Mr Oastler's resignation was not accepted; on December 13th, 1834, he settled his yearly accounts with Mr Thornhill, at Riddlesworth, and instead of borrowing money, as usual, to make up the balance, he left the accounts in their actual state. In fourteen years, the balance against Mr Oastler, had accumulated to 2,709*l.* 11s. 4½d. Mr Thornhill was convinced that Mr Oastler's salary had been inadequate, the offered resignation was not accepted, and Mr Thornhill, in the kindest possible manner, proposed an additional 200*l.* a year to his steward's salary. The balance due to Mr Thornhill was agreed to be taken in Mr Oastler's promissory note, with an understanding that the debt should be annually reduced, which agreement was adhered to by Mr Oastler, and recorded by Mr Thornhill on the back of the promissory note. The arrangement was throughout satisfactory to Mr Thornhill. That Mr Oastler had endeared himself to Mr Thornhill's tenantry, was proved by their having presented to him, on the day of his departure from

Fixby, a handsome silver salver, on which was engraved the following inscription:—"This piece of plate is presented by the tenants of Thomas Thornhill, Esquire, who are resident in the township of Fixby, to Richard Oastler; and is intended as a feeble expression of their sincere respect, and heartfelt affection, both towards himself, and his late revered father, who, together, have for thirty-eight years discharged, with unblemished integrity, genuine kindness, and unsuspected disinterestedness, the office of stewards upon Mr Thornhill's Yorkshire estates: and who will both live, at whatever distance of time, in the best feelings of their hearts.—Fixby, the 25th of August, 1838."

The character which Mr Oastler earned for himself, in the neighbourhood in which he lived, was reflected by a demonstration in his honour, on his departure from Fixby Hall, August the 25th, 1838.

The morning of that day was, in Huddersfield and neighbourhood, a time of stirring interest; the roads leading to Fixby were crowded with travellers bent on paying their respect to a man whom they honoured, and whom they believed "to be persecuted for righteousness' sake." The Hall was thronged with friendly visitors; on the spacious lawn, in front, were assembled groups of warm and anxious admirers; the coach road through the park to the lodge was lined by crowds of people, waiting to greet the "discharged steward" as he passed. In this assemblage were many of the most influential inhabitants of the neighbourhood; numbers of the tenants were there, in whose faces was depicted a strong sense of decorous sorrow. Vast numbers of the poor had that day congregated; *all* felt that they were losing a counsellor and friend. The poor seemed especially desirous of showing their attachment to one, whose ear had always been open to their complaints, and whose feeling heart, had oftentimes prompted him to minister to their wants.

The tenants were evidently loath to part with a steward whom they loved, and with whom, for nearly twenty years, they had consulted as with a brother. The neighbouring gentry, too, evinced their sorrow at parting with one whose society had habitually cheered their family circles. Fixby was never dearer to Mr Oastler than on that morning; in his own words, "Fixby is twice dear to me, from the memory of my father and the remembrances of my early years; it was there I spent my school-boy holidays."

Mr Oastler was escorted into Huddersfield with a long procession of friends, accompanied by bands of music and banners; all the way to Huddersfield the road was lined with an enthusiastic throng. As the open carriage in which Mr and Mrs Oastler and their adopted and affectionate daughter, Miss Tatham, with their faithful friend, Mr Wm. Stocks, passed along the road, they were cheered and blessed by young and old, by rich and poor. Mothers held their babes uplifted, and asked them, to look on the "factory child's benefactor." When the procession reached Huddersfield, it was welcomed by a vast number of factory children, who sung their song, "We will have the Ten Hours' Bill," &c. The streets of Huddersfield were filled with human beings, who made way for the procession, and cheered most lustily. The windows of the houses were occupied, and, in many instances, the house-tops were covered with anxious spectators. Commodious hustings had been erected in a spacious plot of ground near St Paul's Church, where the business of the day closed with the presentation of addresses to Mr Oastler, and the delivery of speeches in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill and against the new poor law. That was a day of triumph to those principles of which Mr Oastler was the exponent. It was estimated that at least one hundred thousand persons had thus openly expressed their attachment to Mr Oastler's principles and

character. Not a few had come from Lancashire to take part in these proceedings.

We know of nothing in our experience, or reading, which has equalled this expression of sympathy. From what had that sympathy arisen? No man had ever despised riches, for their own sake, more thoroughly than had Mr Oastler. That fact was known and appreciated. In the expressive words of a working man, who, when questioned as to the reasons of his sympathy, answered, "He is a gentleman, sir, and honest; is not that enough"?

These proceedings were reported very fully in the press, the strangers present, who were numerous, carried back with them to their homes an account of what they had that day heard and seen. The effect in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill movement was widely spread, and decisive.

The enthusiasm of Mr Oastler's friends led them into error, they, without having consulted him, published a placard which was very offensive to Mr Thornhill. Mr Oastler was deeply grieved at this ill-judged proceeding of his own friends. Mr Thornhill, erroneously, conceived that Mr Oastler was the author of that placard, and replied to it by a letter in the newspapers, in terms not friendly towards his former steward, which letter was followed by a rejoinder. This was the first indication of an unkindly feeling on either side. By a portion of the press, which hoped to destroy Mr Oastler's influence, that circumstance was seized upon with avidity, and political rancour wreaked its revenge on the "discharged steward" with much asperity. An amicable settlement was thereby prevented. On the 25th of October 1838, Mr Oastler was served with a copy of a writ at the suit of Mr Thornhill. On the 10th July, 1840, the cause was tried. Mr Oastler appeared in person to defend; for what reason the following extracts from the *Times*, July 11, 1840, will explain:—

"COURT OF COMMON PLEAS; Friday, July 10.

"*Sittings in London before Lord Chief Justice Tindal and a Special Jury.*

THORNHILL *v.* OASTLER.

"Mr Kelly (now Sir Fitzroy Kelly, M.P.) with whom was Mr Peacock, stated, that the plaintiff was a gentleman of fortune, possessed of extensive estates in Yorkshire. The defendant, who was, no doubt, well known to the jury, and whose talents and abilities were such as to entitle him to their consideration, had been for many years land steward and agent to the plaintiff, which situation had been previously filled by his father, whom, on his death, his son, the present defendant, had succeeded In order to show, beyond all doubt, that the plaintiff was entitled to what he sought to recover, he would proceed to read some letters which had passed between the parties, from which it would appear, upon the defendant's own acknowledgment, that the balance in question was clearly due. The learned counsel then read some portion of the correspondence, which so far was couched in friendly terms on both sides; and he observed that he would refrain from introducing any other matter, not bearing on the precise question before the jury—a course of proceeding in which he hoped that he should be followed by the defendant, who appeared in person to defend the cause.

"Mr Oastler interposed, and observed, that he had no wish to waste the time of the court. If the plaintiff's counsel were sincere in the sentiments he expressed, and was now satisfied to acknowledge, on the part of his client, that he intended only to treat the sum here claimed as a debt, he would give him no further trouble, but submit to a verdict at once, and place himself in Mr Thornhill's hands. He had merely resisted the action, because he understood that it had been imputed to him that he had fraudulently detained

the money; whereas it now appeared to be acknowledged that it was a simple matter of debt.

"The Lord Chief Justice observed, that there was no imputation whatever on Mr Oastler's character here.

"Mr Oastler said, that that was all he ever wished to be settled.

* * * * *

"Mr Kelly said he felt great pleasure at this unpleasant affair being thus satisfactorily settled.

"Lord Chief Justice Tindal: 'I am very glad, Mr Oastler, that this action is brought to such a satisfactory settlement.'

"Mr Oastler bowed to his lordship.

"A verdict, for the plaintiff, was then entered."

By a private arrangement with Mr Kelly, it was agreed that the verdict then given should be, "Without prejudice to a claim of the defendant against the plaintiff for 500*l.*"

These proceedings were watched with much interest by the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill, who appeared to identify their cause with the circumstances and character of their friend, and to increase their devotion to him and the short-time question, because of his misfortune.

"I am," wrote Mr Oastler to a friend, November 21st, 1840, "now in my third year of unprofitable and expensive wandering and legal proceedings; and I may tell you that I do not know by whom I am supported. It is a fact, that the only money I have, comes by letters—sometimes a five-pound note, sometimes a ten, sometimes a twenty—but from whom, except in two instances, I know no more than you." The debt due from Mr Oastler to Mr Thornhill having been demanded, Mr Oastler not having the means to discharge it, was, on December 9th, 1840, lodged in *The Fleet Prison.*

The period between Mr Oastler's departure from Fixby and his arrival in *The Fleet Prison*, was necessarily one of anxiety and expense; he was throughout, very active in

propagating his opinions on the poor-law and factory questions.

Idleness in health was with Mr Oastler an impossibility, and, therefore, he established *The Fleet Papers*, a weekly journal devoted, chiefly to a discussion of the factory and poor-law questions. These papers won their author a wider reputation than he had hitherto enjoyed. Passages from their pages were frequently copied into the columns of the *Times* and other journals, in England and on the continent. Men of all ranks and parties visited Mr Oastler in prison. He very seldom failed to impress visitors with a sense of the importance of the subjects nearest his heart—foremost among these was factory regulation; and thus it was that the means adopted to destroy his influence contributed towards its increase.

Moore, in his witty lampoon, the *Literary Advertisement*, has acknowledged the reputation of that city of refuge, the Fleet prison, for men of letters:—

> "If in gaol, all the better for out-o'-door topics;
> Your gaol is for trav'llers a charming retreat;
> They can take a day's rule for a trip to the tropics,
> And sail round the world, at their ease, in the Fleet."

These lines, though full of satire, are not void of truth. Sometimes the imprisonment in a gaol does not unfit a politician for "out-o'-door topics." Mr Oastler, by many agencies, was kept constantly informed of the proceedings of all parties in the state, and the table of few London editors was covered, every morning, with more important or interesting letters, than were delivered daily into the hands of the discarded and imprisoned steward of an English squire. That the prison hours of Mr Oastler were not without sunshine, the following picture, from the pen of a visitor, will show; it appeared, originally, in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, May 22, 1841, under the heading, "Life in the Fleet!" "I found Mr Oastler," said his

visitor, "in good health and high spirits, but he looks thin; for what with his 'Fleet Papers,' his correspondence, his hard reading, and constant succession of visitors, 'from early morn to dewy eve,' he sadly overleaps his favourite and salutary doctrine of ten hours a day! I met in his room, all in the short compass of a few hours, a member of parliament; the son of a peer, not a public man; an LL.D. of great literary renown; a Polish count, eminent as a linguist; and an author in various walks of literature; another Polish count, who greatly distinguished himself in the recent attempt to liberate his country from the grasp of Russia, and whose father served with distinction in the armies of Napoleon; the author of one of the best books ever published on the social economy and true policy of the British empire; the editor of a daily journal; the editor of a London weekly journal; a gallant and most amiable French captain of horse, who left his country on account of his attachment to Charles the Tenth; the editors of several country journals; several distinguished mechanists; and a long train of casual and almost daily callers, ladies included, who all crowd around the imprisoned champion of humanity, attracted by his fame, or led thither by personal attachment. Men of all parties flock hither. On Monday morning I breakfasted with his 'Majesty.' The party consisted of eight, namely, two Polish counts, the French captain, an author, two editors of public journals, a gentleman from Huddersfield, and your humble servant. Though the beverage consisted of tea and coffee, there was so much sprightliness and *bonhommie*, that one might have supposed that care finds no entrance within the walls (not 'wooden') of the 'Fleet.' The apartment is not large. The Monarch for once made his bed his 'throne;' I was honoured with the chair of state; the friend from Huddersfield attended to the tea-kettle, and the tea and coffee-pots; the gallant

captain took command of the egg department; and there was an appointed purveyor of ham and bread and butter, all of the best quality. I have seen many a 'public breakfast;' but none wherein I found more enjoyment, none near so much intellect or animation of conversation." Such society was to be met with in few places, and it could not fail to exercise a desirable influence on the mind of Mr Oastler.

As proverbial wisdom hath justly said, "Every medal has its reverse." Imprisoment, under favourable circumstances, is still a severe punishment. The caged starling of Sterne, that cried, "I can't get out—I can't get out," forced from the sentimental traveller words which have found an echo in every prisoner's heart—"Grant me but health, thou great Bestower of it, and give me but this fair goddess [Liberty] as my companion—and shower down thy mitres, if it seems good unto thy Divine Providence, upon those heads which are aching for them."

The following extract, from an unpublished letter, descriptive of "prison experience," is graphic and interesting. It has been generously communicated for publication in these pages; a favour which the author gratefully acknowledges:—

"Although," writes Mr Oastler, "many deprivations are necessarily consequent on imprisonment, by this time you will have learned that, compared with that of many others, mine was indeed a season of sunshine. It was truly so. Yet, as every one knows, even in sunshine gnats will sting. So it was in my case. Surrounded by so many friends, daily enjoying so many comforts, I had one 'thorn in the flesh,' that, humanly speaking, could not be extracted. There were, in my own neighbourhood, a few self-seeking men, whom I had nourished as friends, who (hoping thereby to better their condition, by obtaining favour with Mr Thornhill), among their associates,

my old neighbours, whispered dark insinuations, intended to produce a suspicion that 'all was not exactly as it should be between Oastler and his late master;' by such disreputable conduct, they hoped to create an impression adverse to my honesty and honour, and thus to justify their own treachery.

"I had not any power to shield myself from the secret workings of these slanderers. I was conscious that they were moved by selfishness, thus to injure the absent, who, they knew, was guiltless—that, in the hope of their own advancement, they were endeavouring to degrade one who had often been their friend. It was annoying, thus, in prison, to be assailed, without the power to reply. I was obliged to endure those stings with patience, hoping my friends would remember, that I had, in person, appeared in the Court of Common Pleas, to answer any charge or insinuation that might there be brought against me. Resignation was soon followed by an antidote to the venom. It pleased GOD, in his own way, entirely to remove the annoyance caused by those ungrateful slanderers. When I tell you how, you will marvel; and, at the same time, receive an answer to your question. 'I perceive in the second volume, number seven, of the *Fleet Papers* (in your rent-roll) the following notice: "June 13th, 1841.—Fitzroy Kelly, Esquire, Q.C., brought me six bottles of wine, and such wine as would have done honour to a royal cellar. I could say much about my feelings when that gentleman visited me, but I refrain." I do not perceive any farther notice in the *Fleet Papers* of that visit. It must have been very interesting; have you any objection to favour me with an account thereof, for publication?' Indeed I have not. I rejoice that you favour me with an opportunity to make known an act, so thoroughly generous. I should be glad, publicly, to express my gratitude to that friend, whose visit to me, in prison, was so unexpected, and so opportune; to record my

thanks to Almighty God, who, by his own messenger, sent to me the deliverance, so much desired from the net which my ungrateful slanderers had laid.

"I cannot hope, that any words of mine will convey to others, even a faint idea of the gratitude inspired in my bosom, when the learned and eminent *leader* against me in the trial 'Thornhill *versus* Oastler,' entered my cell, and told me his errand. I will relate to you the circumstances. "Before you hear my tale, be pleased to place yourself in thought, where I then was—in prison, with a loved wife and daughter 'outside,' tortured under that calamity,—their wounded feelings being most sensitive to every breath of slander against him they loved more than life, being unable to grapple with insinuations which, to them, were very annoying,—nay, being sometimes obliged to meet the slanderers, who, then, assumed the grasp and smile of friendship and condolence! Remember, too, that I was a prisoner for a debt incurred in upholding the name and character of him, who thus repaid; whose charges against my honesty (if he had any to make), I had appeared in open court to answer. Under these impressions, your mind will be able to understand the full force of the following truth asserted by the editor of the *Times* (Jan. 31st, 1857):—'A malicious word may do more certain wrong than a lie graven on the base of a column. If a man be an honourable man, he would wish that if an imputation be made against him, it should not be whispered in a corner, or passed along from mouth to ear, but made publicly in print, where he could recognise it and destroy it.' Such being the feeling of an honourable man, at large, you may be able to imagine, though I cannot describe, with what feelings of gratitude I listened to the kind offer of one who knew every fact in the case,—Mr Thornhill's leading counsel, when he so unexpectedly visited me in prison.

"I had, once before, met Mr Fitzroy Kelly,—and then, in court, opposed to me. Now, in my cell, he came to offer his

unsolicited, unpaid, and powerful influence with his client, my detainer, to obtain my release! After this preface, you will, I am sure, read with attention and interest the sequel.

'"On Sunday, June 13, 1841, after my return from church, being seated in my cell, engaged in conversation with a fellow-prisoner (a respectable London solicitor), a knock at the door announced a visitor. A servant in livery entered, the bearer of a hamper and a card. He informed, me that his master was at 'the gate,' having been refused admission because at that hour on Sundays 'the gate' was closed; but that the turnkey had allowed him to bring in the hamper. On looking at the card, I said, 'You must be mistaken, Mr Fitzroy Kelly cannot wish to see me.' "Is not your name Oastler, Sir?' 'Yes, certainly.' 'The hamper is directed for you, sir.' There could not now be any mistake. I ran to the lobby, desired the turnkey to see the warden, and ask permission that Mr Fitzroy Kelly might be admitted. That request was instantly granted. When Mr Fitzroy Kelly entered my cell, he saw and instantly recognised my prison companion, whom he kindly accosted. In a few minutes, the London solicitor withdrew. Mr Fitzroy Kelly, in the kindest terms, then informed me, that he sincerely regretted my imprisonment; that, when we parted in the Court of Common Pleas, he thought the dispute was so arranged, that not any unpleasant consequences would follow. Since it had proved otherwise, he having been engaged in the suit for Mr Thornhill, felt, that so far, he was a party, and thought that he was the most likely person to interpose as a mediator, to obtain my release from prison, where, he was sure, I ought not to be. 'If you will accept of my services as your adviser and friend,' said Mr Fitzroy Kelly, and will communicate to me the particulars of your own case, as you would have explained to the court, had you not stopped me, and consented to a verdict; I will, to the best

of my ability, endeavour to persuade Mr Thornhill to grant your release. I am already fully acquainted with Mr Thornhill's case, and am sure there is not any reason why you should suffer imprisonment.' Gratefully, I accepted that most generous offer. From that moment, I felt that the venom was extracted from the slanderers' sting!

"Before Mr Fitzroy Kelly withdrew, it was arranged, that I should prepare to lay before him the particulars of my case, especially, with regard to the 'set offs,' which I had pleaded, when he would return to hear me, and examine my documents. With a light heart I accompanied my kind benefactor to 'the gate,' returned to my cell, and thanked God for this so great manifestation of his goodness.

"My gratitude to my kind and influential friend was much increased, by the conviction, that the leading counsel of Mr Thornhill was the only person whose good offices could have completely vindicated my character, from the secret and slanderous whisperings of my ungrateful traducers.

"Mr Fitzroy Kelly was punctual to his appointment. I was prepared to receive him. He listened with attention to my explanation, fully apprehended my arguments, requested that he might take with him the documents to which I had referred, to peruse and consider them, before he applied to Mr Thornhill for my release.

"Mr Kelly assured me that he would exert himself to the utmost on my behalf; and asked me, if I would consent that he should make such proposals to Mr Thornhill as, on a full consideration of the case, might to him seem best? I assured Mr Fitzroy Kelly that I gratefully accepted his kind offer, with full confidence, confiding my honour to his keeping. If Mr Thornhill insisted on his *legal* claim, and would give me the opportunity, I would endeavour to earn the money and pay him, but, denying his *moral* claim, and having incurred the debt in his service and for his benefit, I would not ask any person to give him security for the payment

of such debt. I added, 'If Mr Thornhill should ask for an apology from me, I cannot gratify him. I do not owe him an apology. I have served him with zeal and fidelity, and that he knows.'

"After perusing the documents, and considering the whole case, Mr Fitzroy Kelly wrote to Mr Thornhill. That letter was read by Mr Thornhill to several deputations of gentlemen, who waited upon him at Fixby Hall to ask him to release 'his old steward' from imprisonment. The particulars of one of those interviews are briefly recorded in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, and the *Halifax Guardian* of September the 25th, 1841. I extract the following :

"'Mr Oastler and Thomas Thornhill, Esq.

"'At a meeting of the friends of Mr Oastler, held at the New Inn, in Bradford, on Friday, September 17th, convened to take into consideration the propriety of addressing Thomas Thornhill, Esq., on the subject of Mr Oastler's liberation, a deputation, composed of Messrs Auty, Balme, and Clarkson, was appointed to wait upon Mr Thornhill, at Fixby Hall, which mansion he was expected to visit, in the early part of the ensuing week.

"' Agreeable to the above directions, the deputation having received information on Monday noon, that Mr Thornhill was at Fixby, took an early conveyance and arrived at Fixby Hall at three o'clock, previous to which, two deputations had already had interviews with Mr Thornhill, viz., from Huddersfield and Dewsbury, on the same subject. The Bradford deputation, however, soon found themselves in the presence of Mr Thornhill, when the object of their mission was briefly stated, viz., that they had been deputed by a meeting of the friends of Mr Oastler, in the town and neighbourhood of Bradford, to wait upon him for the purpose of inducing him to liberate Mr Oastler from the Fleet, believing, as they did, that his services in Yorkshire at the present time, would be of essential benefit to his

country; and they feared, that if Mr Oastler was confined much longer his health would be materially injured and his life shortened, and that they trusted Mr Thornhill had no desire to shorten the days or injure the health of his old steward. They also assured Mr Thornhill, that he could not bestow upon the working class, as well as his own order, the aristocracy, a greater benefit than by allowing Mr Oastler free action in their defence.

"'Mr Thornhill, in reply, stated that he had no ill-will towards Mr Oastler whatever; that he had no wish to shorten his life or injure his health; that he had no doubt but that Mr Oastler might be of use to the country were he at large; that he should be glad to see him liberated; but that he felt that he would not be doing his duty to himself and to his family were he to consent to Mr Oastler's liberation without security for the debt.

"The deputation discussed the subject with Mr Thornhill for upwards of an hour and a-half, urging Mr Oastler's claims upon him, believing as they did that Mr Oastler had sacrificed his all for his country's welfare; all of which Mr Thornhill listened to with the greatest courtesy, and stated, that an influential gentleman in London (the late John Walter, Esq., M.P.), had called upon him a short time since on the same subject, and to whom he had returned the same answer. He also showed the deputation a letter which he had lately received from one of his own counsel (Sir Fitzroy Kelly, Q.C.) in the late action (Thornhill *v.* Oastler), interceding in Mr Oastler's behalf, but to which he had not yet been able to reply.

"'The deputation expressed their gratitude for the interest which that learned gentleman had exhibited in Mr Oastler's behalf, and hoped that that, together with the wishes and interests of the thousands which had, that day, been represented, would be taken into serious consideration, and, that whatever proposition might be made for Mr Oastler's release,

they entreated Mr Thornhill to be as lenient as possible; when Mr Thornhill assured the deputation that their visit would not prejudice him against Mr Oastler, but the contrary.

"'The deputation retired, regretting that Mr Thornhill could not consent to liberate Mr Oastler, but was glad to hear him express himself ready to enter into an amicable arrangement for that purpose; and they would hope that the time is not far distant, when Mr Oastler will be again restored to his family and friends.'—*Leeds Intelligencer* and *Halifax Guardian*, September 25th, 1841.

"One of the gentlemen then present told me that he had never heard anything so eloquent and so affecting as that appeal from Mr Fitzroy Kelly to Mr Thornhill, adding, 'When the squire read that letter there was not a dry eye in the room, the reader himself being moved to tears.' I have not seen that letter, and, consequently, cannot fully apprehend how much I am in debt to the writer!

"My gratitude to Mr Fitzroy Kelly is not less, because his eloquence, so affecting and persuasive; his exertions, so great and disinterested, were unavailing. Daily I pray my Heavenly Father to bless him; while memory lasts, when this transitory scene has vanished away (surely gratitude is not confined to earth) I shall, to him, be grateful.

"True, I know full well, from a very long experience, that gentlemen of the legal profession, as a rule, are very generous. I have often, in private and in public, been honoured with proof thereof.

"I cannot forget that memorable instance of their disinterested friendship, when (before the Lord Chief Justice Denman, and a special jury) I was at York, defending myself against the charge of libel, so many of the learned gentlemen (some of them have since then become judges), rendered me most useful and unsolicited aid,—thus essentially contributing to the glorious victory obtained that day. I have, indeed, good cause to be very grateful to

the lawyers—they have ever been kind to me; but I do not remember to have heard of any instance of their generous solicitude to rescue the persecuted from undeserved punishment so striking, as that shown to myself, by Mr Fitzroy Kelly.

"To this hour I gratefully number among my regular benefactors some honoured members of that learned body. I should be wanting in gratitude were I to omit stating that since my release from prison I have found in Sir Fitzroy Kelly, M.P., a constant, faithful friend and benefactor—one who is ever accessible, ever willing to advise and aid.

I have, my good friend, in thus complying with your request, gratified my own feelings, though I have failed to do justice to the noble act of generosity which I have endeavoured to describe."

Mr Oastler's imprisonment no doubt deepened his experience of life, and increased his influence on national politics. The mind is influenced by associations, and, like the dyer's hand, it is coloured by that with which it comes in contact. It was the saying of a baronet—a scholar and an M.P.—that "the most instructive society in London was to be met in Mr Oastler's room in the Fleet." It must in some respects have been advantageous to the gentleman who was the centre of attraction. Many as were the services rendered to the factory movement by the imprisoned editor of the Fleet Papers, they were much more than balanced by the loss sustained in the absence of his fiery and inspiring oratory over the masses in the north. Mr Oastler's imprisonment very materially retarded the progress and delayed the final triumph of the short-time movement, with which his name and fame are indissolubly connected.

CHAPTER XI.

LORD ASHLEY'S REFUSAL OF OFFICE IN 1841; BECAUSE OF THE UNDECIDED VIEWS OF THE LATE SIR ROBERT PEEL ON THE FACTORY QUESTION.—MR FERRAND, HIS POSITION AND PRINCIPLES EXPLAINED.—THE LATE MR WALTER, OF THE 'TIMES:' HIS SERVICES IN THE TEN-HOURS' BILL MOVEMENT.

LORD MELBOURNE dissolved parliament in 1841, and the country returned a majority of 100 against him; the position of parties was, consequently, changed, and the late Sir Robert Peel became the head of a conservative ministry. Not any circumstance could have proved more decidedly the dissatisfaction of the country with the effete and temporising policy of the whig administration, than the weight of property and numbers which, at that time, called the late Sir Robert Peel to power. He offered to Lord Ashley an office, which was refused, and why, the following note will show:

"London, September 4, 1841.

"Mr Crabtree,—In answer to your inquiry on behalf of the operatives of the West Riding of Yorkshire, I have to reply that an office was tendered to me by Sir Robert Peel. Having, however, ascertained from him that his opinions on the factory question were not matured, and that he required further time for deliberation, I declined the acceptance of any place, under circumstances which would impede, or even limit, my full and free action in the advancement of

that measure, which I consider to be vital both to the welfare of the working classes and the real interests of the country.

"In taking this course, however, I neither express nor feel despair. It will be your duty and mine, not only to persevere, but to redouble our efforts; and I still entertain a hope that her Majesty's advisers, after an investigation, conducted with sympathy and candour, will, under God's good providence, give to us all an answer of happiness and peace.

"I remain your most obedient humble servant,

"(Signed) ASHLEY.

"Mr Mark Crabtree, Bradford, Yorkshire."

The refusal of Lord Ashley to accept of a place under the leader of the conservative party, was evidence of his lordship's determination to succeed with the measure he had taken in hand, and an announcement to all parties, that he had resolved against compromise; the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill had thus in parliament a recognized leader, who had made known to the two rival parties, his resolution to continue in opposition to both, and on the ground chosen by Sadler to fight successfully to victory. The position of parties in the parliament of 1841 did not materially change the numbers of pledged supporters to the Ten Hours' Bill cause, but, it gave to them an advantage in having the whig party in opposition: it may be accepted, as a phase in the constitutional history of England, that the whigs are most disposed to vote for popular measures, when on the bleak side of the Speaker's chair. Lord Ashley's refusal of office gave great satisfaction to his clients in the factory districts, and contributed to strengthen their hopes of success.

Among the new members of the House of Commons was one well known to the working men of the north, and from whom much was hoped; he had been long conspicuous in his own district as a supporter of the principles of the

British constitution, as understood by politicians of the Sadler and Oastler School, and William Busfeild Ferrand was a name closely associated in the minds of working men in Yorkshire with that of Richard Oastler, and of what, the working men believed to be, in their own words, "the rights of labour." We embrace this opportunity of stating summarily our estimate of his views and character.

Mr Ferrand has been for many years a decided supporter of the Ten Hours' Bill; his first public effort was in that movement, a speech at the great Wibsey Low Moor meeting. The circumstance which directed his attention to the condition of the factory children was interesting and remarkable, and is thus related in one of a series of public letters, addressed by him to the Duke of Newcastle, in 1852. "It was soon after Sadler and Oastler unfurled the banner of protection, that I became a public man. At the hour of five on a winter's morning, I left my home to shoot wild fowl. On my road, I had to pass along a deep and narrow lane, which led from a rural village to a distant factory. The wind howled furiously —the snow fell heavily, and drifted before the bitter blast. I indistinctly traced three children's footsteps. Soon, I heard a piteous cry of distress. Hurrying on, again I listened, but all was silent except the distant tolling of the factory bell. Again, I tracked their footmarks, and saw that one had lagged behind; I returned, and found the little factory slave half buried in a snow-drift, fast asleep. I dragged it from its winding-sheet; the icy hand of death had congealed its blood and paralysed its limbs. In a few minutes it would have been 'where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.' I aroused it from its stupor and saved its life. From that hour I became a 'Ten Hours' Bill man,' and the unflinching advocate of 'protection to native industry!'"

Mr Ferrand's life has been spent in the heart of a manufacturing district, he has consequently witnessed

some of the changes which have operated on the condition of the working classes; his fine property, Harden Grange, is close to Bingley, and in the centre of the West Riding. The hand-loom weavers and wool-combers of former days stood high as regarded wages, comfort, and morals. It is universally admitted, that the first effects of the rapid improvement and unregulated introduction of machinery are injurious to the interests of those classes whose labour is thereby supplanted. Mr Ferrand has witnessed the demoralisation of two numerous divisions of the army of industry, who, in the language of modern statesmen, have been engaged "in a hopeless competition against machinery;" so impressed was his mind with the results, that when a member of the House of Commons, he begged of the legislature to institute an inquiry into the effects of the unregulated introduction and use of machinery on the condition of the working men.

He has been, all his public life, in antagonism against a very energetic and powerful body in the state, namely, the free-trade political economists. It has been his habit, in and out of parliament, to denounce the frauds of manufacturers, and he has the honour of giving to the press of the age a new phrase; he was the first, in parliament, to designate that kind of woven fabric, made of old rags, separated by a machine, remade into cloth and sold as new, "devil's-dust cloth," the name of the tearing machine being "the devil." His denunciations of dishonest trading have been fierce and full-spoken, and made him many enemies; had these denunciations received the attention they deserved in 1844, England would, in 1854, have been spared the shame and sorrow of her soldiers having been in rags in the Crimea, and their having had tools useless for the purposes of war, grievously for their own and their country's loss, and notoriously for the gain of the enemy. Mr Ferrand has enjoyed at various periods of his political career

the support of vast numbers of working men. In parliament he was too decided in his views to be an obedient partizan; and his error, in a partizan sense, and in no other, seems to have been that he loved plain speaking, "not wisely, but too well." It has been said, that "men should speak the truth with moderation, that they may speak it the longer"—a maxim profound in worldly experience, but to speak the truth boldly is noble even if uttered in excitement, and without regard to quantity or circumstances; it is more creditable to err in the anxiety of being right, than to live in mental indolence, or to become a mere pawn in the fingers of a political chess-player. In Mr Ferrand's opinion, agriculture is the foundation of all lasting national greatness. We once heard him say, "man deals alone in earth, and all manufacture is a modification of the earth's produce. Now, I say, the more we grow at home the better. Tell me not, Englishmen can't or won't eat home-grown corn—grow enough to feed them all, and try them. Tell me not, that we can have no great home manufacture—look to our woollens, see what flax might be grown. I dare pledge my life, that Englishmen could do very well with linen shirts. I say, everything you import, which you can grow at home or find a substitute for, so long as you have men who beg 'a brother of the earth to give them leave to toil,' is a national loss. Then, to boast of your imports is folly; and if all have not a reasonable share of their own produce, that which they themselves have helped to bring into existence, to brag of your exports is madness. It is our duty to look at home first." These opinions may or may not meet with popular approval, but they are sincerely entertained by Mr Ferrand, and in keeping therewith, he is an improving agriculturist. He has, on many occasions, rendered to the Ten Hours' Bill movement very effective services. He is a man of natural talent, an apt, ready, and powerful speaker; his speeches

have been, by a portion of the press, subjected to much adverse criticism, yet, so far as we know, his leading principles remain unchanged, and he is now, as of old, "A church and king tory, and proud of being by birth an Englishman." The centralization and increase of manufacture in a district, is a certain cause of an increase in the rental of land. The rapid communication of steam power has equalized, or nearly so, the market prices of the principal produce; the ready market afforded for milk and butter where there is a crowded factory population, raises the value of land in the immediate neighbourhood. Had Mr Ferrand encouraged the building of factories on his own estate, he would, beyond doubt, have vastly increased his own income: he prefers keeping up the old mansion and its wide-spread grounds in a thoroughly rural state. It is a saying of his own—"Factories in brisk times spring up like mushrooms, no extra encouragement is required—in dull times, they are too numerous to be useful." Few land-owners in England could gain more by the local growth of manufacture, than Mr Ferrand. His unwillingness to encourage the building of mills on his property has been frequently urged against him: it is an evidence of his consistency, for which he foregoes large yearly advantage, and one, for which he deserves the respect due to an act of duty, as appreciated in his own understanding; he has for many years been an advocate for a parochial allotment system suited to the wants of a manufacturing population, under the impression that the employment of spare hours in garden culture was necessary for health and desirable for morals, a practice he approved of as "a check against the evils of the mill system," and which he has advocated, in and out of parliament, with all the energy of his nature. Like Sadler, Oastler, Fielden, Bull, Walter, Mr Ferrand has, from first to last, opposed the principle of the New Poor Law Amendment Act.

Mr Ferrand has endeavoured to reduce his views on public

questions to practice, by letting land in small allotments to working men in Bingley and its neighbourhood. He has let above a hundred acres to working men, the average is one quarter of an acre to each allottee. The experiment has been in operation for fifteen years. The landlord has not lost one sixpence of rent ; the effect, socially and morally, has been most beneficial. During the whole of that period, there have not been more than two or three applications to the poor-law guardians, from these small land occupiers, for relief, and these were cases of severe family sickness. Mr Ferrand recently expressed his satisfaction on the result of his attempt at practical improvement in the following terms :—"Confirmed drunkards have been completely reformed, idlers have been changed to busy operatives, families, formerly steeped in poverty, have been raised to comfort and independence ; their meals supplied with wholesome vegetables, both in summer and winter; and I have solid reasons for believing, that a happy and satisfied contentment pervades the minds of the occupiers.

"As a magistrate, I am not aware of an allotment occupier having ever been brought before the bench for any infringement of the law."

It is to be regretted, that a public question of so much importance as manual labour, in its relation to machinery and national strength, did not receive, as Mr Ferrand desired, the attention of parliament; majorities can out-vote minorities, and writers declare that "the whole question is settled," but it is always desirable to give to an important and disputed subject, the most complete possible investigation. The working-men are not now satisfied that machinery is to them invariably advantageous, and among their leaders, the subject is one of constant discussion. Mr Ferrand's failure in commanding the attention of the legislature, on this great social question, was one of those unsuccessful efforts, which can only be named to be deplored. Truth

never loses by investigation, and those who opposed Mr Ferrand's opinions would have honoured themselves, had they manifested a willingness for enquiry; his efforts to suppress "the truck system" were energetic and useful. Mr Ferrand has for some time past ceased to take a leading part in the local politics of the West Riding. His occasional letters in the press show that he is not an inattentive spectator of the events of the age, and that he, as formerly, keeps a keen eye on those signs which form the index of the social condition of England.

Another important acquisition to the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill movement in parliament, was the late Mr Walter, who, in 1841, represented for a brief period the important town of Nottingham. The late Mr Walter belonged to a class of men truly valuable, but frequently unappreciated, those active and practical men, who work themselves, and find useful employment for others. Mr Walter had a mind well proportioned and balanced, he was mentally strong, rather than great. In any sphere of life requiring industry, and only solid working talent, he would have been successful, he knew well how to appreciate and reward merit, how to combine and apply agencies to produce the desired result, under a settled contempt for all counterfeit humanity; there was in him, a genuine and generous love of mankind; he was eminently the friend of the working man, so far as his social interests were understood. The *Times* is, in an industrial sense, Mr Walter's monument, and who in England could desire a greater. Mr Walter gave to the Ten Hours' Bill a constant and powerful support, and for many years, on fitting occasions, it was in the columns of the *Times* a leading subject; the value of such aid cannot be estimated. It is astonishing how men, having kindred sympathies, will sometimes allow their antipathies to direct them in opposition; a remarkable instance of this kind of angular antagonism existed for a consider-

able period, between Mr Walter and Mr Cobbett,—each had said strong things against the other; on the most practical questions of their age they were agreed. Mr Oastler and Mr Walter were cordial friends, a concordance of opinions in politics, caused a sympathy and respect, which became personal and lasting. Mr Walter, when in London, was a regular visitor at *the Fleet*, and *the Queen's Bench*, and, for years, kept up with Mr Oastler a correspondence on subjects of public interest. The following extract from one of Mr Walter's letters to Mr Oastler, written on the evening of the day on which the poll, in favour of Mr Walter, had closed at the Nottingham election of 1841, will illustrate the influence exercised by the editor of the *Fleet Papers*, on "out-o'-door topics." "I hope," wrote Mr Walter, "to make to you in person my acknowledgments for the kind interest you have taken in the affair throughout, and for your propounding originally the important measure which has been crowned with such success." Mr Walter's introduction to the constituency of Nottingham, was under the following circumstances: a vacancy in the representation of that borough having occurred, an influential tory, and an influential chartist, without having communicated with each other, wrote on the same day, to ask Mr Oastler if he could recommend a candidate, in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill, and opposed to the New Poor Law. On the day Mr Oastler received these letters, his friend Mr Walter called at the Fleet, and asked if he, Mr Oastler, had any influence at Nottingham, there being a vacancy in the representation of that borough, and he, Mr Walter, being wishful to have a seat in parliament for the purpose of obtaining the repeal of the New Poor Law. Mr Oastler replied (at the same time handing to Mr Walter the two letters that morning received from Nottingham), "I was just about sending those letters to you, and to ask you, if you would allow me to give to my two friends your name."

After enquiring as to the influence of Mr Oastler's correspondents, it was resolved that Mr Oastler should communicate Mr Walter's name, advising each of his, Mr Oastler's, friends to meet the other, and mutually consult on the subject. Mr Oastler did so, and strongly recommended Mr Walter to his, Mr Oastler's, correspondents; they met, and forwarded to Mr Walter a requisition, signed by influential electors of the tory and chartist parties, requesting him to become a candidate.

Mr Walter entertained a decided conviction, that the average talent and honesty of the House of Commons reached a comparatively low standard; he was very anxious to discharge faithfully the duties of the representative of the people; within the walls of parliament, his efforts on their behalf did not meet with the support requisite for success, and it is not surprising to read, as we have done, expressions of his disregard concerning the decision of the election committee, appointed by the House of Commons, to try the validity of his claim to represent Nottingham, and which committee unseated him on petition. His ejection from parliament was a loss to the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill; which measure he approved to the close of life, and the principle of which continues, when necessary, to receive the influential support of "the leading journal," a position, which the *Times* newspaper acquired under the control of Mr Walter, and which it continues successfully to retain.

Why Mr Walter supported the movement for factory regulation, we can answer from his own lips, his words explain the foundation of his politics. Addressing a public meeting in the Corn Exchange, Manchester, on April 17th, 1844, he said, "What is the object of domestic legislation? It is not to improve the condition of the rich: they can sustain themselves. The laws may restrain the improper indulgence of their passions, indeed, and

they have a right to look for protection under them from external violence; but the great object of home legislation is, or should be, to improve the condition, and strengthen the foundation of the great basis of society, the industrious, the operatives, upon whom the whole structure of human society rests; for if this be disturbed and unsettled, there can be no tranquillity or security above." "It is not likely that I should seek to degrade my humble brethren by an unseemly comparison; but let us take that noble animal the horse, man's companion and fellow labourer. Whence is it that so many are crushed down to an early death,—whence is it that we see so many with tottering knees, broken wind, and premature infirmities? Is not the universal answer, "They have been worked too young—they have been made to toil too long, and are now, when they should be in the vigour of their days, worth nothing; the sand cart, and soon after the dog-kennel, are their doom; and that remark which applies to this noble animal, may, but with too much truth, be applied also to a large portion of our labouring fellow subjects in the manufactories. They are worked too young, and too hard; and hence they drop into a premature grave; or, which they dread almost as much, an union workhouse. Domestic legislation, I say, should prevent, not sanction, such barbarity." These are words of clear, practical common sense, flowing from an honest heart, and will commend themselves to the hearts of those who can feel for the least fortunate, but not the least useful portion of society.

Mr Wm. Walker, and Mr William Rand, of Bradford, impressed with a deep sense of duty, resolved to wait personally on every member of Sir Robert Peel's cabinet, in the hope of convincing, at least, some among them of the propriety of supporting the Ten Hours' Bill. This self-imposed task was promptly executed; it is not too

much to say, that two gentlemen practically conversant with factory labour, were capable of imparting the fullest information on the subject. The Hon. John Stuart Wortley, M.P., Wm. Beckett, Esq., M.P., George Strickland, Esq., M.P., John Hardy, Esq., M.P., Charles Hindley, Esq., M.P., and John Fielden, Esq., M.P., at the request of Messrs Walker and Rand, signed their names to a circular requesting a meeting of members of parliament for Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire, and desired them to invite such of their constituents, being millowners, as should be likely to attend a meeting in London. A numerous and influentially attended conference was, consequently, held in the British Hotel, in Cockspur street, to discuss the merits of the Ten Hours' Bill. The Hon. John Stuart Wortley, M.P. for the West Riding, occupied the chair; the discussion which ensued was of the highest importance, and occupied the greater part of two days : the most bitter opponent to interference by law with the hours of labour in factories, was Mr John Bright, who was supported by the disciples of " the Manchester school," they scorned the very thought of interference as utopian and unnecessary, and claimed " the right to do with their own as they liked;" they, however, were not generally supported, and a resolution in favour of an eleven hours' bill was approved of by a considerable majority. This was, by all the promoters of the Ten Hours' Bill present, considered as an attempt at compromise, to which they at once refused to concede. These proceedings, in London, were brought before a public meeting in Bradford; the conduct of those who adhered to the Ten Hours' limitation, was highly approved. Messrs Walker and Rand were thanked for their spirited efforts on behalf of a cause they had so generously espoused and steadfastly maintained.

CHAPTER XII.

RENEWED AGITATION IN THE FACTORY DISTRICTS—EFFORTS OF SIR JAMES GRAHAM TO INSURE A SETTLEMENT OF THE QUESTION—PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT.

In the autumn of 1841, Lord Ashley visited the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and was received with enthusiasm; his lordship's object was to acquire such information, relative to the wants and interests of the manufacturing population, as was required to enable him, with effect, to pursue his labours in parliament. The visit of Lord Ashley aroused the dormant energies of the supporters of the factory movement, and steps were immediately taken to strengthen his efforts in the House of Commons. The political excitement of 1839 had died away, leaving behind it much angry feeling and disappointment among the remnant of its supporters. It was a saying of one of the leaders of the first French revolution—"Those who make half revolutions, dig their own graves." This saying was the result of a penetrating insight into the nature of events; its spirit has been reproduced, after the lapse of three quarters of a century, by so impartial an observer as M. Guizot, who in his *Life of Richard Cromwell*, declares that to watch the escape of power from the hands of men who have failed in using it, "is a melancholy but most instructive study." The failure of the attempted insurrection at Newport, in 1839, though supported only by a section of those who avowed

themselves, the "advocates of the *People's Charter*," was most injurious to the reputation of the whole. A result which did not in any way affect the worth of principles, but which was most material as to popular power in a state. In passing, we venture to observe, that a contributing but minor cause of the extraordinary emigration of late years, was the dissatisfaction which followed the failure at Newport. Very many of the young men, of high spirit and resolution, left England with a strong feeling of repulsion, and settled in the *United States*; in many cases, the remaining portions of their friends followed in after years.

Not any parliamentary leader of an important social question, could have manifested greater devotion and industry than was, in 1841, practised by Lord Ashley. In the course of his speech at Leeds, in August of that year, his lordship narrated the following circumstance:—"At Stockport, a young woman, twenty years of age, was caught by the machinery in a mill in which she worked, and, after being whirled round, was dashed to the ground with her ankles dislocated and her thighs broken. He would not say all that he had heard about her employer, though it might be well enough known; but this he would state, that her wages were due on the Wednesday, and the accident happened on Tuesday. It might be supposed that he paid her wages, and several weeks in advance, to support her under her distressing circumstances; but did he do so? No; he calculated what the time would come to from the accident to her wages being due, and deducted eighteenpence from her earnings. He (Lord Ashley) knew that the principle of the law was favourable to the workman, and, determined to show that it was so, he instituted a prosecution against the factory owner, and had the pleasure of recovering for that poor girl, 100*l.* damages, besides which, the man who refused 4s. to box his machinery off, had all the expenses on both sides to pay, amounting in all to

nearly 600*l.*" The factory operatives thoroughly appreciated the worth of the facts stated. These impressed them with a sense of the value of law, and helped to destroy the popular belief that the law was opposed, in principle, to the interests of the working man. His lordship acknowledged the assistance he had received from Mr Sadler, Mr Oastler, the Rev. G. S. Bull, Mr John Wood, and Mr Wm. Walker, of Bradford; in parliament, from Mr John Fielden, of Oldham, Mr Brotherton, of Salford, and Mr Hindley, of Ashton, names known to and honoured by the factory operatives. When in Yorkshire, his lordship was the guest of Wm. Walker, Esq., of Bolling Hall, Bradford. They devoted their days to waiting on influential opponents of factory regulation, in the hope of making converts or weakening the virulence of opposition; and their nights in addressing public meetings. These efforts were pursued with untiring energy, and his lordship esteemed no labour too arduous on behalf of his unfortunate clients, whose hopes of redress he increased by sympathy, and whose confidence he sustained by frankness, energy, and perseverance on their behalf.

While Lord Ashley, in his speeches at this period of factory agitation, was careful to express his sense of the importance of the particular measure he advocated, he was specially watchful to guard against being misunderstood, as believing that a Ten Hours' Bill, alone, would prove a panacea for the social evils of the manufacturing districts. He looked on it as "a prelude to other healing and beneficent measures." This statement, alike candid and creditable to his lordship, was, by his opponents, frequently, in the bitterness of party-feeling, urged against making any concession to the "Ten Hours' Bill men," who were charged with aiming at more than they avowed.

The members of Sir Robert Peel's administration were not unobservant spectators of the events of the time: they

had driven the whigs from power, because of doubts and delays on questions of national moment, and with Sir James Graham at the Home Office, were not likely to be unmindful of the proceedings of parties in the manufacturing districts. Lord Ashley's refusal of office had forewarned them that, so far as he was concerned, not any compromise was probable. On February 7th, 1841, Sir James Graham, in answer to a question put by Mr Stuart Wortley, then one of the members for the West Riding, made known the intentions of the government, which were limited to the introduction of a bill, found in the Home Office, having been prepared by Sir James's predecessor, Mr Fox Maule. This announcement was accompanied by the significant declaration that "It was not intended to propose any such regulation, as in some quarters had been strongly recommended, as to the limitation of the time of labour in factories of young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, as some persons hoped, to ten hours a day." This declaration was fully appreciated by the advocates of the Ten Hours' Bill, who now understood their true position, and, as of old, resolved to oppose the government by moving amendments in favour of their adopted measure.

Public feeling on the question of factory labour, was kept alive by public speaking and writing. Mr Oastler was writing, week by week, in *The Fleet Papers* on the subject, and kept up a constant correspondence with his many friends in the north—his letters were very influential; the delegates, when in London, consulted with him regularly and profited by his advice. Among the humbler but telling efforts was the publication of "A narrative of the experience and sufferings of William Dodd, a factory cripple, written by himself." This narrative corroborated the evidence of many witnesses on the factory question. It possessed all the force of individual experience, and the unaffected sim-

plicity of its style had a charm for every reader, while the past sufferings of "the cripple," the past circumstances of his life considered, and his intellectual power, awakened pity and admiration. One of the best, because clearest and most practical, pamphlets of that time, was "A Letter, addressed to the Right Honourable Sir James Graham, Bart., M.P.,"—the production of two influential and successful Yorkshire manufacturers, Mr William Walker and Mr William Rand, of Bradford. These gentlemen, after having waited on the principal members of Her Majesty's government, published their answer to objections in the form stated. We have hitherto omitted some facts of moment, because they were contained in the subjoined letter of Messrs Walker and Rand :—

"To the Right Hon. Sir James Graham, Bart., M.P., Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, &c., &c.

"Bradford, Yorkshire, Nov. 16, 1841.

"Sir,

"Availing ourselves of the permission with which you have favoured us, we now endeavour to lay before you answers to some of the leading objections which have been advanced against the proposal, that the hours of labour in mills and factories for all young persons, between thirteen and twenty-one years of age, be restricted to Ten per day. They can now be legally worked twelve, which is two hours a day longer than those work who are otherwise employed.

"The first objection to which we advert is, that 'interference with labour is improper.'

"Our answer is, that parliament decided this objection forty years ago ; and that every subsequent alteration in the law has been a still more positive interference, the justice of which is apparent; for there is no maxim clearer, than that it is the bounden duty of the legislature to interfere

with labour, when the oppressed parties are too weak and helpless to make proper terms for themselves, and cannot, by an appeal to their employers, obtain a remedy.

"The case of the negroes in Great Britain's West India possessions is one in point. Their claims were found so unquestionable, that parliament interfered even to the extent of manumitting purchased slaves—adults as well as children. And the Commons of England scrupled not to vote twenty millions sterling to satisfy the slaveholders, because the state had become implicated by sanctioning that species of property.

"A second objection frequently urged is, that 'parents are the natural protectors of their children.'

"We readily admit that parents will, for the most part, protect their children from imminent and apparent danger; but all experience shows, that few can resist the temptation to derive advantage from the labour of their children, even when its duration may be carried to a length which must eventually prove destructive to their health, and incompatible with their moral improvement. It is also well known, that the parents of many of the children who work in factories, are unable to obtain the means of their support in any other way, and therefore cannot be considered in a condition to refuse to let their children work the long hours therein required and allowed.

"The English factory inspectors, over and over again, have drawn attention to the fact, that the parents in these districts are not to be relied upon as protectors of their children, but are often ready to go all lengths in getting them false certificates of age. We might refer to many instances which have occurred under our own eyes; but we prefer presenting you with the opinion of the Rev. Walter Fletcher, chancellor of the diocese of Carlisle; a venerable man, who had been in the commission of the peace for many years. That gentleman told a friend of ours, a year or two ago, that

his 'experience had convinced him, that while the masters and surgeons were often much to blame in the matter of certificates of age, the parents themselves were decidedly most of all to blame: that from their own parents especially, the children needed protection. He had been so much pressed by parents to countersign certificates of 'thirteen' for children, whom he knew (having their baptismal registers in his own possession) to be under the age specified, and had found so much ill-feeling created by his conscientious refusals, that he did not re-qualify as a justice of the peace, for that and no other reason.'

"A third objection, to which we take this opportunity of alluding, is, that 'factory labour is not more injurious to health than agricultural employment.'

"When those who make this assertion select their cases (and that is too often their course), there can be no approximation to truth. The averages of both pursuits must be taken, and the results are then obvious to all. The official returns of mortality decide this question. The tables calculated upon the showing of those returns in 1832, and appended to the report of Mr Sadler's committee, established the fact—that taking a given number of deaths in the great spinning and power-loom weaving towns, and the same number in ordinary towns; and comparing them with those in agricultural districts of unhealthy, as well as healthy counties, as many deaths in the former (the spinning and power-loom weaving towns), occur under twenty years of age, as in the latter, under forty! An attempt indeed was made to invalidate these deductions, but it signally failed. The late Mr Sadler, in a pamphlet of great labour and research, entitled 'Factory Statistics,' and published after his death, refuted every objection raised; and the arguments and calculations employed by the several parties who had engaged in the controversy, were finally submitted, by Lord Ashley, to the

impartial investigation of Mr Woolhouse, an eminent actuary, well known by his labours on the 'Nautical Almanack,' and esteemed by the late Dr Greggory, of Woolwich, to be the second mathematician of his day. Mr Woolhouse corroborated the original statement. And it is a curious fact, that the excessive mortality of the manufacturing districts, long the subject of vehement dispute and contradiction, has so entirely ceased to be so, that Dr Bowring, the member for Bolton, in a recent debate in the House of Commons, availed himself of the undue rate of mortality which notoriously exists in the spinning and manufacturing towns, as an argument for the repeal of the corn laws!

"The annual reports of the registrar-general give further incontrovertible evidence on this head. But they do not give all the evidence they might. If that public officer would take townships instead of what he calls districts, which are generally poor-law unions, where an agricultural population is often classed with a manufacturing one, the information afforded would be far more valuable than it is.

"The ex-registrar of Birmingham, Mr Paer, instituted a compasison between that town and Manchester a year or two ago. There is, doubtless, much that is wrong going on in Birmingham in reference to the maternal care of children; but Mr Paer, notwithstanding, could state that, in the same aggregate of deaths, the number in Birmingham under sixteen years of age, did not exceed those in Manchester under three years of age!

"A fourth objection often insisted upon is, that 'if parliament should interfere as we propose, the English manufacturer would be unable to compete with foreigners.'

"We hold this argument to be a most fallacious one. Great Britain is, after all that can be said, the great regulator of prices in most manufactured articles. The foreign manufacturer would gladly get better prices, if England were

not perpetually lowering the continental markets, in spite of their prohibitory duties. Their tariffs, altered as they are from time to time, to meet emergencies, sufficiently show in what dread they are of English goods.

"The British manufacturer possesses many local and natural advantages, but there is one which is too often lost sight of, though it surpasses all others—he employs the most skilful and industrious people on the face of the globe. No race of people, of whom we have any knowledge, will work with the steadiness an d expertness which so generally characterize the natives of Great Britain. We may also offer the decisive fact on this head, that the cost of cotton goods in France is thirty to forty per cent. more than the cost of similar goods in this country. This has been stated by Dr Bowring, but other respectable authorities have affirmed the difference to be much greater. Next to Great Britain, France consumes more cotton than any other nation. The same remarks apply in a great degree to the United States of America, which country, next to France, rivals Great Britain. In America we learn that wages are higher than in England—that machinery costs double the price—that fuel is much dearer —and the interest of money greater. But if (passing over the question of right and justice, which ought to be paramount) we must argue this subject on the ground of political economy, and we are able to show that the limitation of labour in factories to ten hours a day would make no material difference in the cost of production, the argument about foreign competition must fall to the ground.

"Now, it is universally admitted, that the term of twelve hours' labour cannot be maintained for any lengthened period. If it were constantly persisted in, the redundancy of goods in the market would be so great, that they would be sold at ruinous prices. All profit would be annihilated. It is also our conviction, that the daily

hours of working in mills have not exceeded ten, on the average, for the last seven years. Moreover, the usual amount of orders could be executed with ten hours' daily labour, even without additions to the existing machinery. The markets would thereby be kept more regular, and, as a matter of course, employment and wages would not be subject to so many vicissitudes. There are persons who think, that the cost of production would not be at all increased by a reduction of the hours of labour from twelve to ten. We are of a different opinion; but we are persuaded that the extent of its influence upon the price of the manufactured article would not exceed what is often effected by the fluctuations of a single market-day. It, therefore, cannot be right that a consideration so trivial as this, should delay the settlement of a great question, involving the highest interests of an immense population.

"These objections failing, another of an opposite kind might be urged, namely, that 'wages would be reduced' by lessening the hours of labour, and that thus much misery would be occasioned. The government may be told, that the operatives would have their wages reduced to the full extent of the reduction of the time of labour. We by no means believe that such would be the case, and for the following reasons.

"The twelve hours' term of labour, as we have already said, cannot be maintained throughout the year. The attempt causes a constant recurrence of gluts. The glut is taken advantage of to force a reduction of wages, and reductions of wages are generally followed by a shortening of work. The operative has thus two evils to contend with at once. It is not an uncommon thing for even partial work to be refused in some mills, and that for months together. The cotton districts, especially, are greatly harassed by these changes. The more frequent the recurrence of these alternations in the quantum of

labour, the more readily does one abatement follow another; and we believe, that the enactment of a ten hours' term of labour would greatly check this downward tendency of wages, which is creating wide-spread misery and discontent amongst the working people.

"But to take the very lowest view of the subject of wages,—for the sake of the argument, we will admit that wages might possibly be reduced to the same extent as the hours of labour. Still, with a ten hours' restriction, as much work can be performed in the aggregate, as is now performed, taking the whole year round, under a twelve hours' limit; and should it be performed, and at only the existing rates per pound, or per yard, or per hour, there would, at the end of the year, have been the same amount of capital distributed in wages as before.

"Again, the value of labour must always be influenced by the extent of redundant labour in the market; and the tendency of the ten hours' restriction would be, to diminish the number of the unemployed. This could not fail to have a beneficial influence on wages. The great causes of distress amongst the operatives are, the irregular supply of work, and irregular wages. For want of a system of education, which can never be carried into effect until a Ten Hours' Factory Act is passed, there is undoubtedly great improvidence in the factory districts; that improvidence never can be checked while the working classes are exposed to such perpetual changes in their circumstances, and while the demand for labour itself is so often interrupted. No system of education alone, could meet and cure the evil, while those causes remain in operation.

"There is another view of the subject which is too important to be passed over. At the present time, a considerable number of unemployed persons are to be found in the manufacturing districts. We do not attempt to

touch upon the causes of this, further than is absolutely necessary for our immediate purpose; but if the legitimate trade of the country should (under the auspices of a conservative government) extend, and more of our products be called for after the enactment of a ten hours' term of daily labour, many who are now standing idle in the market-places, because 'no man hath hired them,' would find profitable employment far more readily and generally than they can under the present long hours' system. Thus there would be less 'complaining in our streets.'

"Again, under a limitation of factory labour such as we advocate, there would also be less necessity for the population to be crowded into large towns. They might live more in the neighbouring villages; whereas now they must need be near the mills.

"Before we bring our remarks to a close, we feel it incumbent upon us to remind you of the medical evidence which parliament, from time to time, has taken on this subject; and, especially, we would draw your attention to that which was given before the select committee of the Commons in 1832. One of those professional gentlemen, Dr Bisset Hawkins, in his published report, inserted a very remarkable passage to this effect,—'that he had less difficulty in stating it as his opinion, that the labour of young persons working in mills and factories should be limited to ten hours a day, because his opinion was corroborated by that of a great majority of all the respectable practitioners in Lancashire.' We may add that the same sentiments have been expressed by nearly all the medical practitioners in the factory districts of Yorkshire.

"A most important part of the case still remains to be noticed. The present factory hours of labour prevent young persons from learning domestic, moral, and religious duties. They have no time before six in the morning, nor after eight in the evening, to acquire any useful knowledge. How then

can we wonder that they grow up in ignorance, and become a prey to vicious habits? When we recollect that the great majority are females, it is truly awful to contemplate the result of continuing to absorb and enslave their energies of body and mind in factory labour.

"Some most interesting facts in connection with factory legislation may now be mentioned; which ought, we think, to settle the question in the minds of those who are afraid of foreign competition.

"The late King of Prussia, having had his attention drawn to the fact that the manufacturing districts under his dominion could not supply their contingents to the army, and that the agricultural districts had, in part, to make up the deficiency, made a law, bearing date March 9th, 1839, which decrees that no young person under sixteen, employed 'in daily labour in any manufactory, or in the works attached to mines,' should be worked for a longer time than ten hours in any one day. The regulations allow no child to be admitted to work before nine years of age, and are very stringent with regard to education.

"The unsatisfactory state of factory legislation in our own country, may account for the delay that has occurred in France, in reference to it. But the difficulty of obtaining recruits for the army in the manufacturing districts of France, in a due proportion to the population, has forced the legislature to pay great attention to the subject; and though some delay has arisen, we cannot doubt that something will be speedily done in France, to place the factory system upon a proper footing. The French minister presented a factory bill to the Chamber of Peers on the 11th of January, 1840. The bill was referred to a committee, and Baron Charles Dupin, in the name of the committee, drew up and presented a report, in which he makes such honourable mention of England, that we cannot resist quoting a sentence or two.

"'Great Britain, while she was the first to set the example of a protecting law for children and young persons, and took this step without waiting until rival countries would unite in such a measure, far from finding that it has checked the progress of those branches of industry to which the restrictions were successively applied, has, on the contrary, seen them flourish and increase with a rapidity four times as great as all her other manufactures.'

"'More recently, similar laws have been passed,' continues the report, 'by two of the principal European powers, Prussia and Russia; and Austria has fixed a limit below which children cannot be employed in factories. With these great facts before us, of four great nations having anticipated us in the generous purpose of coming forward in aid of injured youths and children, we cannot, without dishonour, turn a deaf ear to those demands that have been made upon us on behalf of the young persons in our manufactories.'

"Alluding to the sordid considerations which are too often urged, the report contains this remarkable passage,—'But so far from being stopped in her humane course by them, Prussia, which placed herself at the head of the Commercial Union of Germany, did not fear to establish a duration of labour, even two hours a day less than the highest limit fixed by the English law.'

"The French factory bill passed the Chamber of Peers, after discussions, in which unusual eloquence and ability were exhibited, ninety-one voting for its adoption, and only thirty-five for its rejection. It was presented to the Chamber of Deputies on the 11th of the following April. So much of powerful argument was used in the discussion and advocacy of the measure, that it is certain the subject will not be suffered to slumber long. We attribute the interval chiefly to the repeated postponements which the English amended

bills have experienced. There is too much talent and high character enlisted on the side of factory legislation in France, not to bring the question there to a successful issue.

"In these facts we see the strongest inducement for the British parliament to mature the good work which it has commenced; and we confidently hope, that the ensuing session will not be suffered to pass without a satisfactory and final measure being brought forward, by Her Majesty's ministers, with all the strength of the government. Certain we are, that nothing short of a ten hours' limitation can be a settlement of the question; because nothing less can prevent an overwhelming mass of ignorance, pauperism, and misery from accumulating. The extent of suffering has repeatedly been such, that the local authorities have not known how to deal with it; a crisis every now and then arises which is checked (not the misery, but the outbreak) by the military being called in, and thus our manufacturing towns, one after another, and in quick succession, become garrisoned towns. The coercive system takes the place of paternal government and ancient institutions; and men learn to look upon those among whom their lot is cast, no longer as friends and neighbours, but as enemies. It is an exorbitant price which a government pays for attending only to the wishes of the few, and disregarding the just claims of the many.

"The factory system is fast superseding domestic employment. The daughters of the working classes are now required to leave their home occupations, and enter the factories. Many of these formerly possessed the means of profitable industry at home as hand-loom weavers, but by the power looms they are either deprived of work altogether, or have their wages reduced to a mere pittance. Immense numbers of hand-loom weavers are brought into the pitiable condition of being unable to get work for themselves, and at the same time of having their daughters employed in the factories

for such long hours as are quite inconsistent with female strength, and the performance of cottage duties.

"To a conservative government, the factory workers are looking for the redress of their wrongs, and we earnestly hope they may not be disappointed.

"Allow us to apologize for the length at which we have taken the liberty to address you (a length, however, which has far from exhausted all the points we could have urged, as intimately bearing upon this most important question), and in conclusion to intreat you to relieve the oppressed youths and maidens of our factory districts; to give them time to learn to fear God, and honour the Queen; to understand their domestic duties, and to fit them for the character they have to sustain in the world. We would implore you to afford the clergy and other ministers of religion, opportunity to exercise amongst these greatly neglected masses of population, the pastoral office. Then may we hope to see paternal and filial ties strengthened by family intercourse and Christian principle—then may we expect the blessing of Almighty God upon Her Majesty and Her Majesty's government.

"It is now full five-and-twenty years since the first Sir Robert Peel himself proposed a ten hours' bill, and on the 13th of June, 1815, a committee of the Commons fixed upon ten hours and a half, as the daily period of labour for all between nine and eighteen. In the following year, the same or a similar bill was referred to a select committee, on which occasion the first Sir Robert Peel thus recorded his deliberate opinion of a state of things which, in many respects, might be advantageously compared with that which now exists.

"'Such indiscriminate and unlimited employment of the poor, consisting of a great proportion of the inhabitants of trading districts, will be attended with effects to the rising generation so serious and alarming, that I cannot

contemplate them without dismay; and thus that great effort of British ingenuity, whereby the machinery of our manufactures have been brought to such perfection, instead of being a blessing to the nation, will be converted into the bitterest curse.' Mr William Rathbone Greg, in a pamphlet, published in 1831, and Mr Sheriff Alison, in his evidence given before the select committee on the combination of trades, about three years ago, have uttered similar predictions.

"If we did not know that interests of the highest importance would be hazarded by any further procrastination of this question, we should not press it as we do; but we feel confident that there can be no subject more urgently demanding the attention of Her Majesty's government.

"We have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient and very humble servants,

"WILLIAM WALKER.

"WILLIAM RAND."

A deputation from the Ten Hours' Bill committees of the West Riding of Yorkshire was appointed in 1842, to wait on the second Sir Robert Peel, to state generally the condition of the working classes of the West Riding, and to urge on Sir Robert the necessity for remedial measures, and principally the Ten Hours' Bill. The deputation were received cordially by Sir Robert; they had also interviews with Sir James Graham, Lord Wharncliffe, the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, with the Duke of Buckingham, and Lord Lyndhurst, then Lord Chancellor. The deputation consisted of Mr George A. Fleming, Mr Joshua Hobson, Mr John Leech, Mr Mark Crabtree, and Mr Titus S. Brooke, than whom no men were more familiar with the condition of the West Riding, and none better able to state their views as to remedial measures. The report of the deputation is a very able document, and well deserves the attention of those who desire to understand

the social condition of the manufacturing districts in 1842. The conversation of such men must have had weight on the minds of statesmen; it brought the question of the social condition of the labouring population to the ears of ministers from the lips of those who, from observation and much study, had made the past and present condition of those whom they represented integral parts of their own knowledge. Copies of the report of the deputation were widely and numerously circulated; the mind of England was during this period in much trouble as to what could be done by way of relief for the distress in the northern counties, and a document which at any time, because of its own merits, would have commanded attention from those who study the condition of the people, received, in consequence of the difficulties of the times, a more than usual share of attention. It is at all times desirable that statesmen should attend to the representatives of working men, they have often information of the greatest moment to convey, information frequently of a kind not to be had from other organs; and those who listen to their statements will seldom fail to reap a reward. Nature is not a bigot in the distribution of her gifts, and it sometimes happens that men of the highest order of genius are labourers, who, amidst many trials, have preserved the true dignity of manhood, and with whom to come in contact is instructive and refreshing. The members of this deputation, with the exceptions of Mr Titus Brooke and Mr John Leech, had earned their bread by manual labour; in the advance of others in the social scale their sympathies for their own order have been kept keenly alive. Mr Fleming and Mr Hobson, as members of "the fourth estate," have, on many occasions, proved how thoroughly versed they are in that knowledge of "common things," which is never so well understood as by those superior minds whose early training has been in "labour's rugged school."

The opinion of the supporters of factory regulation, as to the seriously injurious effects of factory labour on health, received a very remarkable corroboration in the general report of the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain, 1842, prepared from documents supplied by the sanitary commission, to Mr E. Chadwick:

"In the evidence of recruiting officers, collected under the factory commission of inquiry," wrote Mr Chadwick, "it was shown that fewer recruits of the proper strength and stature for military purposes are attainable now than heretofore from Manchester. I have been informed that of those labourers now employed in the most important manufactories, whether natives or emigrants to that town, the sons who are employed at the same work are generally inferior in stature to their parents. Sir James M'Grigor, the Director-General of the Army Medical Board, stated to me the fact, that a corps levied from the agricultural districts in Wales, or the northern counties in England, will last longer than one recruited from the manufacturing towns, from Birmingham, Manchester, or near the metropolis. Indeed, so great and permanent is the deterioration, that out of 613 men enlisted, almost all of whom came from Birmingham and five neighbouring towns, only 238 were approved for service."

On March the 7th, 1843, the long-desired government measure was introduced by Sir James Graham:—"The age of children," said the honourable baronet, "employed in factories was, at present, limited from nine to thirteen. He proposed to reduce the number of hours from eight to half-past six, and also proposed that six and a half hours' labour must take place either in the forenoon, or in the afternoon, wholly, and not in both. He was disposed to believe that the lowest age at which children might begin to work could be safely reduced from nine to eight, so that a child from eight to thirteen might work

from six and a half to eight hours, either in the forenoon or in the afternoon, wholly, and not in both. The committee had recommended that the maximum age for females should be altered from eighteen to twenty-one. Young persons were not now permitted to work more than twelve hours a-day. He proposed to alter the age at which females should be permitted to labour ; in the case of males coming under the denomination of 'young persons,' he did not propose to make any alteration. . . . With respect to Saturday, he proposed that the hours of work should be limited to nine, so that young persons would be worked twelve hours on the other days, and nine on the Saturdays. He proposed to limit those modes of making up lost time to those factories where water labour is used, and to provide for the fencing of machinery. The bill would include within the scope of its operation all children employed in silk factories; and he hoped still further by a separate bill, brought in with the sanction of Her Majesty's government, to include the lace factories, and the children engaged in print works." Thus far the contemplated measure had the merit of extending the application of the principle of regulation, and was, on the whole, a decided concession to the claims urged by Lord Ashley, but did not meet the views of his lordship as to a limitation of the hours of labour.

The bill was read a second time on March 24th, and on this occasion the educational clauses of the bill, which were very important, were subjected to severe animadversion. The educational part of the ministerial measure aimed at uniting the church and the dissenting bodies with the "Committee of Privy Council on Education." All parties admitted that education under the factory act had, with rare exceptions, been a failure, and that a necessary provision was required for the education of factory operatives. Sir James Graham, in his attempt to reconcile the heads of the

various religious parties in a general measure of education, succeeded in offending all. On May the 1st, the bill was read *pro forma*, and we find Sir James declaring that—"The petitions which have been presented against the educational clauses of the Factories' Bill, to which I am about to advert, have been numerous almost without a parallel;" and he proposed, in consequence, important modifications. "Coming events cast their shadows before." These educational discussions, remarkable as they were for calm deliberation, notwithstanding, foreshadowed the difficulties since realized by every statesman who has endeavoured to solve the educational problem; then, as now, the difficulties necessary to be overcome were greater without than within the walls of parliament. On June the 15th, Sir James explained to the House of Commons, that his efforts to conciliate the dissenters had been fruitless, and that he had resolved not to press the educational clauses of the bill. On the 19th the bill passed through committee with amendments, and was ordered to be printed, and on the 30th Sir James Graham explained the proposed alterations in the law; those that referred to education were as follow:—"In five days out of the seven the children should be educated for three hours, either in the forenoon or in the afternoon. By the existing law, no notice was taken as to the place where the education was given, or as to the system of instruction that was adopted. Now it was proposed by the present bill that the Privy Council should have the power to appoint inspectors to visit the schools to which certificates were granted; and on receiving a report from the inspectors as to the inconvenience of the place, or as to any objection in the method of education pursued, the Privy Council were empowered to notify to the schoolmaster the defect so reported, and unless within three months that defect should be remedied, the Privy Council would have the power of stopping the grant made

to the school." These proceedings in parliament awakened an additional interest, beyond that at all times existing, on the question of factory legislation. This increased interest was educational, and had its roots deeply buried in the party and sectarian influences of the age, no doubt representing much that was sincere and excellent in character, but also much that was pretentious and intolerant; the government having been repulsed and obliged to amend their own measure, not from a conviction of the propriety of amendment, but from the force of a variously expressed and clamorous opposition, were not very energetic in urging the amended measure on the renewed attention of parliament. On July the 31st, the late Sir Robert Peel, in reply to a question put by Lord Ashley, said: "The postponement of the factories' bill which had been before the house, to a future session, had not arisen from any doubt on the part of the government of its importance or propriety, but only from the desire expressed by hon. gentlemen on both sides of the house, that it should be fully discussed. He was prepared to give his noble friend an assurance that a bill would be introduced at a very early period of next session, for the purpose of amending the law on this subject."

Mr Charles Hindley, the member for Ashton-under-Line, on the same evening moved for leave to bring in a bill to amend the Factory Act. At the request of Sir James Graham the motion was withdrawn.

Mr Hindley, himself a millowner, had often expressed his conviction that the workers in factories were not free agents, and that the simplest and most efficient means of enforcing obedience to the Factories' Act, was by placing a restriction on the moving power. Beyond doubt, this course, if adopted, would have facilitated the discovery of the violation of the law, and thereby have contributed to certainty in punishment. The honourable member for Ashton-under-Line had a

standing maxim, namely, "man in a factory is not free," it was opposed to the current opinion of the legislature; its soundness, however, was apparent to the mind of the factory operatives, who in this instance entirely agreed with Mr Hindley, and would have rejoiced to have had this view of the question fully discussed in the House of Commons. It has been often repeated by Mr Hindley, no doubt from a consciousness of its truth and importance.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR OASTLER'S RELEASE FROM PRISON—PUBLIC ENTRY INTO HUDDERSFIELD.

If to bear misfortune and imprisonment with fortitude and without complaint be an evidence of greatness, to Mr Oastler must be conceded that merit. True, he had during his imprisonment many friends and enjoyed some comforts, but, to be confined within prison walls for three years and two months was not a trifling trial to even a man of a sound and strong body and mind, and it is not remarkable that after so long a confinement, Mr Oastler's health began to give way. Among Mr Oastler's prison friends was Mr William Atkinson, author of a very ably written book on *The Principles of Political Economy* and of *The Church.* Both works are remarkable for a close analysis of the principles maintained by others, and contain full expositions of the author's views on the Christian theory of government. The substance of the first appeared in a series of letters in *The Fleet Papers.* Mr Atkinson suggested the possibility of Mr Oastler's release by public subscription.

Mr Oastler had not a more constant, indefatigable, and affectionate friend than Mr Lawrence Pitkethly, of Huddersfield. That gentleman, from the first to the last, throughout the factory contest, had been to Mr Oastler as a right arm. Not any one felt the absence of Mr Oastler more keenly; and it was Mr Pitkethly who adopted the first practical

step towards the accomplishment of Mr Atkinson's object. Knowing the ardent friendship which subsisted in the mind of Mr Ferrand towards Mr Oastler, Mr Pitkethly resolved to consult with Mr Ferrand as to the propriety of adopting the means necessary for gaining the desired end. Mr Ferrand immediately tendered his services, adding, "Call your meetings, and for a month I shall be at your service."

The trustees for "The Oastler Liberation Fund" were—the Right Honourable Lord Feversham, John Walter, Esq., Sir George Sinclair, Bart., John Fielden, Esq., M.P., William Busfield Ferrand, Esq., M.P. The treasurer was Matthias Attwood, Esq., M.P. The central committee, meeting in London, was composed of gentlemen of the highest standing; the committees in the country were not less respectable.

The late Matthias Attwood was well known as an influential banker, and was, on mercantile questions, justly esteemed as a very high authority, and acknowledged to be the most influential opponent of the second Sir Robert Peel on the currency question. Mr Attwood had been a member of the Sadler committee in 1832, and continued to be a constant supporter of factory regulation in and out of parliament; integrity and benevolence were the leading traits of his character. He was the active coadjutor of Mr Sadler, and his personal friendship for Mr Oastler was manifested in many a kindly act. The name of Matthias Attwood had great influence; he was for thirty years a member of the House of Commons, and was invariably admired for his clear practical common sense, his urbane and manly bearing. His death, in 1851, was the subject of regret to all who knew him.

The chairman of the London central committee was Lord Feversham. No man knew Mr Oastler better than did his lordship, and it was an act worthy of a British peer, to be faithful to an old friend in the hour of trial. Mr Ferrand was the active spirit of the Oastler liberation movement. In all the arrangements for meetings throughout the country, Mr

Ferrand was assisted by Mr Squire Auty, of Bradford, Yorkshire. For many years Mr Auty has been the supporter of factory regulation ; in politics he may be briefly designated "an Oastlerite ;" he is an active politician in his own neighbourhood, and is remarkable for perseveringly maintaining what he believes to be the truth, without regard to opposition ; he was personally attached to Mr Oastler, a circumstance which gave additional zeal to his labours, and fitted him to be the useful ally of Mr Ferrand in their labour of love.

We are unable to recall, by the aid of memory, a more pleasing instance of how thoroughly the spirit of party may at times become paralyzed, and the nobler sympathies of the heart of man rule predominant, than by remembering the circumstances attendant on Mr Oastler's release from prison.

The press was unusually unanimous in its support of the Oastler liberation movement ; party feeling (with a few exceptions, which only served to make the rule conspicuous), was forgotten ; London and provincial editors united in urging freedom for the captive. Few men, in the heat of political conflict, had said stronger or less pleasant things of each other than had Mr Oastler and the late Mr Baines, M.P. for Leeds. Forgetting the annoyances of the past, and remembering only Mr Oastler's many virtues, which Mr Baines had recognized early in life, he, when solicited, generously cast his mite into the common treasury, and heartily desired to shake hands with his early friend, as a free man. This was very creditable to Mr Baines, and we record the circumstance as a just tribute to the memory of a public man. Many members of the press and others, while helping forward the desires of Mr Oastler's more immediate friends, were very decided in expressing dissent from some of his views, and naming what they conceived to be his failings; but the substance of all such dissent and criticism referred, in most cases, rather to manner than to objects; and all agreed that a very heavy compensating

penalty had been paid for what had, when viewed in the severest possible light, been an act of indiscretion. In the words of the editor of the *Times*—"Without taking into account many special pleas in favour of Mr Oastler, and which appear on the face of this unfortunate affair, the worst his case amounts to is this—that he discharged too liberally and too hospitably the delicate office of resident representative of a wealthy absentee—an office in which he succeeded his father; that he did not sufficiently number and weigh his own outlays and services in this situation; that in the course of many years he suffered a large debt thus to accumulate, which, however, for many years, his employer even made a ground of increased liberality; and, lastly, that he suffered his public labours to draw too largely on his time and means."

There were exceptions—a ministerial journal, a Liverpool newspaper, and *The League* (the official organ of the free-trade party), had the unenviable notoriety of making some bitter observations; these exceptions served to make the rule more conspicuous.

The meetings which were held in the principal towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire, to aid in Mr Oastler's liberation, were enthusiastic and unanimous; the subscriptions paid were varied in amount, and manifested an extended sympathy. These meetings were attended by Mr Ferrand, who travelled and talked incessantly; resolute in his purpose, and sparing neither time nor money in its consummation. Persons of all ranks addressed these public meetings; clergymen, noblemen, magistrates, and working men, bore a willing testimony to Mr Oastler's high character, and valuable services. The first public meeting was in Huddersfield, a town in which Mr Oastler was thoroughly known. At this meeting, the Rev. Wyndham Madden, incumbent of Woodhouse, near Huddersfield, said, that "his feelings of personal regard for Mr Oastler had brought him to that meeting. Had his presence implied a

concurrence in all the sentiments, all the sayings and doings of Mr Oastler, he would not have been present. He differed from Mr Oastler upon many points, and had expressed his difference to him at various times, when he had the pleasure of meeting him; but had always ventured to express himself as Mr Oastler's friend. The object of the meeting was, simply to express sympathy for Mr Oastler, contrive means to effect his liberation, and to put forth a helping hand here and elsewhere, in the accomplishment of that object. He was fully persuaded there was not a kinder-hearted man, nor one more desirous for the welfare of his fellow creatures, than Mr Oastler. He had been his pastor for many years, and ought to know him, and he could bear witness to his private character. He never applied to him on behalf of any religious or charitable object, but his heart and his hand were immediately opened more freely and largely than he anticipated, for the cause he advocated, and even to give, in the cause of distress, sometimes, more than he could afford. He considered that Oastler, with all his faults, had been a great benefactor to his country. This had been the result of his own personal observations as a minister. He had been in Yorkshire about nineteen years, and he had seen a marked difference in the condition and character of the operatives, which he could trace to the exertions of Oastler. He could remember, in 1825, seeing from his residence, being on a hill that overlooked Huddersfield, the factories of Huddersfield illuminated all night; and he could adduce an instance which had come under his own observation, of the hardships inflicted upon the working classes, during a period of supposed prosperity in 1825:—in many of the mills 'the hands' were kept at work through the whole night. He would relate an instance connected with the horrid system, to show the necessity of Mr Oastler's exertions on behalf of the mill operatives, and which also showed the cupidity of the masters; one which showed the necessity of legislative interference between the avarice and cupidity of the

millowners, and the weakness and impotence, he might say, of the working classes, who were *compelled* to work those long and inhuman hours, or *starve*. He had visited one of his poor people, and saw a girl in bed; he asked what was the matter, and if she was sick? The answer was, no; she was tired, and had been worked too hard. This was before the passing of Lord Althorp's Eight Hours' Act, when the masters sought to make as much as they possibly could of human flesh and sinews; which system had destroyed many lives. He asked for the particulars of the case, of which he would give them the substance. That child had been in the factory from six o'clock in the morning on Monday, until six o'clock on Tuesday night. On Wednesday morning, she again went to work till Thursday night; Thursday night she came home, and slept that night if she could. She went on Friday, and remained until five o'clock on Saturday night. He observed, 'that this was cruel.' She replied, 'If I don't go, they will get another, and some must do it.' He said, 'It was impossible, and that they could not subsist thus;' but they said, 'The men and the children worked and got rest at different times, beneath the machines.' He asked the mother, 'Why she did not send another girl (for he saw she had one) to relieve this overworked child,' and the mother answered, 'that the factory masters would not let her send her sister to help her; and they told her, if she would not work the hours required, others were ready to do so.' At that time, he knew it was not uncommon for children to sleep in the mill, under the machines that they worked at; such treatment it was impossible for nature to stand. That such a case as he had mentioned, should have been one that could not be punished by the law, showed the necessity for interference between the cupidity of the masters and the weakness of the persons employed. He considered that Mr Oastler had, under God, been primarily instrumental in putting a stop to this abominable system, having first directed public attention to

the evils of the system, and to the misery that was inflicted on young children, and others, by excessive labour in those dens of unhealthiness. And he also considered, that to Mr Oastler, under God, with the assistance of others, they were indebted for the Eight Hours' Act, which was certainly an improvement on the former state of things. As a clergyman, who had received a commission from his Master to look after the lambs of his flock, he felt that Oastler had thus conferred a benefit, by rescuing these lambs from the cruelties to which they have been subjected, and by allowing the children, not only time for recreation, but for education, and also for allowing them time to attend to the concerns of their souls. He utterly condemned that system, which, whilst it destroyed their bodies, rendered them unable to attend a Sabbath school, or the house of God, and led to the destruction of their souls also. He could bear testimony to the effects of Oastler's labours in this neighbourhood; and he could only say that he should truly rejoice if the effect of that meeting stirred up a determined spirit in that neighbourhood in favour of Oastler. He considered he was only doing his duty in bearing testimony to the benefit accruing from the exertions of Oastler, and he would bear testimony to those exertions. Human nature was selfish at its root, and when a man was shut up in prison, people were apt to forget their benefactor. But they ought to feel for the prisoner; and he hoped that the voice of that meeting would awaken the dormant feeling of sympathy towards a man, who had been a benefactor to the operative classes, and that those friends of Oastler, who had the means, would contribute towards his liberation."

This kind of testimony, as to character and usefulness, was unimpeachable, and of it there was an abundance. It was felt by those who knew Mr Oastler to be a reproach, that a man who had so disinterestedly and eminently served the interests of humanity, should continue to live within the walls of a debtor's prison. To no man was time of

more value than to the late Mr Walter, of the *Times*; he, notwithstanding, travelled specially to Huddersfield, in order by his presence and words to give effect to the first meeting for the liberation of his imprisoned friend. Mr Walter's speech was excellent; his anxiety to convey to Mr Oastler the result was creditable in the highest degree. "On the 23rd of November, 1843," said Mr Oastler, "after the prison gates were closed, late in the evening, I was sitting in my solitary apartment. A turnkey entered.—'A gentleman wants to see you, sir, in the outer lobby.'—'Who is he?'—'He did not give his name; he said he wished to see you, sir.'—'Is he old or young?'—'I cannot tell, I scarcely noticed him; but came directly to inform you.'—The prisoner entered the outer lobby—there stood the gentleman in travelling attire. He was indeed a friend!—'How are you, my friend?'—'Quite well,' I thank you.'—'I have just returned from Huddersfield;—I came direct from the station, before I went home. We had a public meeting last night, in order to effect your liberation.'—What followed need not be told, save, when I declared my inability to express my gratitude, the visitor, taking me by the hand, said,—'Don't say a word, my friend. Had I refused to go, I never could have seen your face again. It was my duty, and I am delighted that we have succeeded so well.' That friend was Mr Walter." There was in this act, on Mr Walter's part, a generous manliness, deserving to be remembered. Such friendship ennobles character, and conscience, yields an ample satisfaction in return for the gifts of *duty*.

These public meetings served the twofold purpose of aiding Mr Ferrand's benevolent object, and, because of his advocacy of Mr Oastler's claims to public sympathy, they forwarded very materially the Ten Hours' Bill movement, for the merits of that measure, and Mr Oastler's exertions

on its behalf, were ever uppermost in Mr Ferrand's mind, and constant themes of approbation from his lips.

In addition to the meetings held in the manufacturing districts of England, there was one in Ireland which, because of some specialities, deserves attention. Mr Oastler's ultra-protestantism has been a feature in his public life, and the protestants of Dublin felt the desirableness of assisting in the liberation of one who from principle, and at the sacrifice of high personal position, had proved his adhesion to the church, and the constitution as by law established. In 1837, when Mr Oastler contested, for the second time, the borough of Huddersfield, he was in a minority of twenty-one. On that occasion, on the hustings, he was asked, "If you are returned to parliament, and a bill should be brought in to repeal the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, would you vote for that bill?"—Mr Oastler replied, "Yes, I would." In the afternoon of that day a number of voters, more than sufficient to have turned the scale at the election, waited upon Mr Oastler, to ask him to withdraw that declaration, or in some way to lessen its effect, else, they would not be able to vote for him, which on other grounds they very much wished to do. Mr Oastler thanked them for their friendly feeling, and added, "If I enter the House of Commons, it shall not be by equivocation; what I stated on the hustings I shall perform, if returned." The consequence was the loss of a seat in the legislature.

The Dublin meeting was thoroughly protestant, and was addressed by the Rev. T. D. Gregg (now Dr Gregg), and other distinguished Irish protestant leaders. In addition to the local protestant talent of Dublin, there were Mr Ferrand, Mr Squire Auty, and Dr Gifford, editor of the London *Standard*, whose long-tried and able advocacy of protestantism, gave to his words, in such an assembly, great weight. Dr Gifford said:—"He owed to Richard Oastler, to say, that he

(Dr Gifford) had observed him for many years, and a nobler specimen of that noblest work of the creation—an honest Englishman—he had never seen. He was a man of truth, a man of courage, a man of power, a man of honour and religious feeling; and if he had done wrong (and who had not done wrong?) his wrong had been the excess of right; his errors, if he had errors, were those of a noble mind, and it belonged to a noble mind, not only to forgive such errors, but to support such a man as Richard Oastler. It was such men as Oastler who protected the integrity of the British empire." These were the words of a generous heart, which, when spoken by so high an authority, could not fail to serve the end desired; they reflect honour on Dr Gifford, who was anxious to serve a persecuted and much misunderstood man.

Mr Ferrand was present at from thirty to forty meetings, and the result of his labours, with those of other friends, was, at the close of 1843, the realisation of nearly 2,500*l.* Early in January, 1844, the central committee resolved to take immediate steps for Mr Oastler's liberation.

Mr Oastler's friends being anxious for his release, Jonathan Schofield, W. Walker, W. B. Ferrand, John Milner, Joshua Pollard, Isaac Milnes, J. Walter, Wm. Underwood, Lord Feversham, John Fielden, L. Pitkethly, and Samuel Glendenning resolved to guarantee what remaining sum was required; and on Monday, February 12th, 1844, Mr Walker and Mr Pollard, both magistrates in the West Riding of Yorkshire, paid to Mr Thomas (Mr Thornhill's attorney), for debt, interest, costs, and sheriff's expenses, 3,243*l.* 15s. 10d. In this sum was included the 500*l.* claimed by Mr Oastler, which claim was not prejudiced in the arrangement made in the Court of Common Pleas, between Mr Kelly and Mr Oastler. That sum was demanded in deduction from the above-named amount. Mr Thomas replied, that his instructions were positive to receive the whole sum, but on behalf of Mr

Thornhill he promised that the 500*l.* should be returned. Messrs Walker and Pollard, desirous that not any further delay should take place in Mr Oastler's release, accepted that promise, and paid the sum demanded. Mr Thornhill died a few weeks after the payment of Mr Oastler's debt, his daughter inherited the entailed Yorkshire estates ; his son, Mr Thomas Thornhill, possessed the Norfolk estates, purchased by his father. Mr Oastler desired his friends not to press for the payment of the 500*l.*, the return of which had been promised, he was confident of Mr Thornhill's honour, and believed the promised payment would be made. A considerable delay ensued; a full statement of the facts was made to Mr Thomas Thornhill,—no answer was received ; subsequently application was made to his solicitors in London, to whom a full detail of the circumstances was forwarded. They readily undertook to make the required representation to Mr Thornhill; the applications were repeated from time to time. He continued to treat these with silence; a solicitor on behalf of Messrs Walker and Pollard demanded payment; the agents of Mr Thornhill intimated, on behalf of their client, his intention to plead the statute of limitations. Mr Thomas Thornhill thus retains 500*l.*, which his father's solicitor was pledged to return.

Mr Oastler was conducted from the prison to the British Coffee House, Cockspur street, by Mr Ferrand and Mr Rashleigh, then members of the House of Commons ; he was welcomed by a body of friends, presided over by Lord Feversham. In the proceedings which followed, the noble lord congratulated Mr Oastler on his release, and avowed that the principles of both on all leading questions were identical. Mr Walter declared, that in his efforts against the New Poor Law Amendment Act, he had never received so much assistance from any man as he had from Mr Oastler. All felt that an honourable Englishman had been liberated ; the expression of his gratitude, as best befitted the occasion, was dignified and manly. Mr Oastler possessed

the affectionate regards of many among the working classes, who felt truly grateful to Lord Feversham, Mr Ferrand, Mr Rashleigh, and others for their exertions on behalf of "the king of the factory children."

On the question of principles, Mr Oastler was as usual distinct. He said:—"I believe the country will prosper when the church assumes its proper place in the state, and is considered, not as the political engine of any government, but as the mother teacher of principles of religion. I believe, also, that there is another essential principle of the constitution of England, without which it cannot stand, and that is the principle of self or parochial government. I believe the principles which have lately been introduced into this country, under the name of centralization, to be at eternal war with the principles of liberty incorporated in the constitution. I believe, too, that the principles of our constitution demand, that every man that is born in the country should have a home in the country; and it is because of the maintenance of that principle, that I have been so much hated, and so much maligned, by those who profess to be the friends of the poor; but, who in works, belie their professions. I believe, also, that the rights of the Crown, the rights of the peerage, and the aristocracy, are as sacred in the eye of the constitution as all other rights." This was plain speaking, and easy of comprehension.

Mrs Oastler was a gifted, pious woman, whose whole desires were concentrated in the welfare and labours of her husband. It is more easy to conceive than express the emotions which moved the heart of her liberated husband, when addressing his benefactors, he said:—"Permit me to offer you the thanks of my dear wife. I have it in charge from her,—'The first time you meet your friends, tell them, if you can, how much I feel obliged to them.'"

On Shrove Tuesday, February 20th, 1844, Mr Oastler made a public entry into Huddersfield; his old friends and neighbours welcomed him back among them, with a right hearty Yorkshire greeting. The circumstances of that day are fresh in our memory; it was to thousands a day of heartfelt rejoicing. The roads leading to Huddersfield, from towns and villages miles distant, were enlivened by groups of men, women, and children, travelling thitherward to manifest their affection for him whom they designated "the poor man's friend." The morning was fine, the sun brilliant, and nature joyous with the hopes of spring. About eleven o'clock in the forenoon, crowds gathered at the railway hotel, Brighouse; all was contentment and rejoicing, and from many lips passed the words, "God bless the old King." An address was presented to Mr Oastler from his supporters in Yorkshire. We shall never forget the attendant circumstances. There stood a venerable Englishman, released from prison, surrounded by old and loved neighbours and friends; the eyes of all were moistened with tears. The words spoken by Mr Tweedale, a dear and valued friend of Mr Oastler, and one whose labours for factory regulation had been constant and influential, on presenting the address, were few; the reply was brief, but full of meaning: the declaration—"our aim has been to divorce labour from poverty, and to wed labour with plenty," met with a ready response. There are times when thought and feeling discard the copious use of words; this was one of these occasions. The scene closed, and preparations were made for mustering the procession; soon, all were in motion, preceded by bands of music. The distance from Brighouse to Huddersfield is about four miles, through a hilly and romantic part of Yorkshire. At every turning of the road the numbers augmented; as the crowd increased, so did the musicians,—for Yorkshiremen, like the inhabitants of all lands of hill and glen, are lovers of music. The cheering was repeated

loud and long, and the sound echoed from hill to hill, human voices and soul-stirring strains mingling together. As the procession approached Huddersfield, it was marshalled in the following order:—A body of horsemen. Band. Banner inscribed, "Oastler, our defender"—"Oastler and native industry." Band. Flag—"Oastler and no Bastille." A group of small flags—Union Jack. Band. Several carriages. Band. Banner inscribed, "Lindley—welcome," and on the reverse, "The Ten Hours' Bill." Band. Mr Oastler, in an open carriage, accompanied by the Rev. G. S. Bull, Mr Jonathan Schofield, of Raistrick, and Mr Wm. Stocks; Mr W. Hulke was upon the box-seat with a splendid Union Jack. Numerous other carriages. Band.

Mr Oastler addressed from 12,000 to 15,000 persons in public meeting, assembled in the open space of ground in front of the Druid's Hotel, on the Halifax Road. The anxiety of that vast crowd to hear the words which fell from the lips of their venerated friend, was extraordinary, and the calm attention of all was not the least remarkable feature of that day's proceedings.

Mr Oastler was a changed man; the energy of former years had been mellowed by experience and reflection, and chastened by imprisonment. The same principles were enunciated, but there was a gravity and weight in the manner, a mildness yet strength in the expression, unknown in the earlier stages of the factory and anti-new-poor-law movement. The press (metropolitan and provincial) reported the proceedings, and the event contributed its share of influence to the growing force of public opinion in favour of an efficient ten hours' bill.

Mr Jonathan Schofield, of Raistrick, who presided over the Huddersfield meeting, was the oldest of the tenants of the late Mr Thornhill, on his Yorkshire estates. Mr Schofield is in all senses "a representative man." He is a Yorkshire manufacturer of the old school, whose principal pride

has been to make the best goods, and pay the highest wages in his district. He believes it to be his duty to find regular employment for his workmen, at all times, and has occasionally paid a heavy penalty in consequence. He has, throughout a long life, been remarkable for his attention to the old and the young; he has not moved with the times. On all occasions he talks the Yorkshire dialect, makes no pretensions to being "the fine gentleman," but carries everywhere with him the politeness of the heart, and is welcomed alike by rich and poor, is esteemed among his neighbours as a "father and friend," and is justly valued by the Thornhills, as an excellent tenant, as a man of probity and honour. Mr Schofield had witnessed the whole progress of the change from domestic industry to the introduction and development of the unregulated factory system, and its improvement by act of parliament, and has, from first to last, been the friend of the oppressed. The judgment of such a man, on what he has observed in his own experience, is worth much more than the rhapsody of innumerable theorists, no matter how eloquently penned. Mr Schofield entirely agreed with Mr Oastler, as to the effects of unregulated factory labour, and the deterioration during its operation on the social condition of numerous bodies of working men in the West Riding; both zealously worked together throughout the factory agitation. It was spirited and becoming of Mr Schofield cordially to receive his old friend and neighbour on his return to Huddersfield, and to preside over the first public meeting which welcomed him home again, among those to whom he was so well known, and by whom he was so sincerely beloved.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT IN 1844.—IMPORTANT PUBLIC MEETINGS IN THE COUNTRY.—CONFLICTING DECISIONS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.—MRS OASTLER.

It has been a feature of modern times, for the speeches in parliament to increase in length, to such an extent, indeed, as to have become, in the opinion of some persons, unnecessarily lengthy. Every attentive observer of parliamentary history, must have perceived the great change in the time consumed in parliamentary debates now and formerly. When the first Sir Robert Peel introduced the factory question to the attention of parliament, debates were conversational; speech-making, except by a few orators of the highest mark, was then an unknown art. Parliamentary oratory, like some others of the products of modern industry, has been remarkable for increase in the quantity rather than the quality. Beyond doubt, the influence of the debates in parliament is greater now than at any former period; the improvement in reporting, and the vastly extended circulation of the press, give to orators an influence which their predecessors did not possess, and one which it will be to their credit and usefulness not to abuse. The great length of the debates on the factory question, precludes the possibility, in consideration of time and space, of presenting to the reader more than a summary of the facts necessary for an understanding of the position of the opposing parties in the legislature. In these debates, no

new facts were stated; the more important phase of the question, was the influence marshalled, by the leaders of the factory movement, at public meetings, and the efforts made to induce parliament to adopt the Ten Hours' Bill.

On February the 6th, 1844, Sir James Graham introduced to the notice of the House of Commons the promised measure on factories; the following were the principal points of his speech: "As the law now stands, the word 'child' applies to children who are admitted between the ages of nine and thirteen. I propose in the present bill that the age shall be altered, and the term 'child' be applied between the ages of eight and thirteen, instead of nine and thirteen, and that such children shall not be employed in the forenoon and the afternoon of the same day. By the existing law 'young persons' are defined to be those who are between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. I do not propose to make any alteration in that part of the act, but I propose that such young persons shall not 'be employed in any silk, cotton, wool, or flax manufactory for any portion of the twenty-four hours longer than from half-past five o'clock in the morning, till seven o'clock in the evening in summer, and from half-past six o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock in the evening in winter; thus making thirteen and-a-half hours each day,—of which one hour-and-a-half is to be set apart for meals and rest, so that their actual labour will be limited to twelve hours. By the law, as it now stands, all persons above the age of eighteen, without distinction of sex, are considered to be adults, and to their hours of labour there is no limitation whatever. Under this state of the law, female adults are wholly unfitted for the tasks to which they are subjected. I propose to limit their hours of labour. No time to be made up, excepting where the power is water exclusively, and that lost time shall be made up within three months; that 'young persons' shall not labour more than thirteen hours in any

one day, and that there shall be a cessation of all labour between the hours of twelve at night and half-past five in the morning; silk mills to be brought under the operation of the act. In allowing full time for education, and in not permitting any child to be employed who does not produce a certificate of attendance at some school, government does all that it can under the present circumstances. I much fear that the enactments already existing are almost illusory. Even the stoker of the furnace is occasionally to be found acting the part of a factory schoolmaster. Up to this time, it has been confinement in a school-room, not education." Sir James's opinions were very much modified, not as regarded the desirableness of education, but as to the ability of the state to provide the required means, and he founded his hope of improvement, on the belief, that "the most flagrant abuses were fast giving way under the force of public opinion."

The discussions at various times, on the factory question, had evolved many striking and, comparatively, unknown facts.

Mr Oastler's re-entrance into public life, contemporaneously with the desire of the government to effect a settlement of the factory question, was an interesting and important event. The Ten Hours' Bill committees, in Yorkshire, naturally looked to their old friend for counsel, and he naturally desired to express his opinions, on the position of the factory movement, in and out of parliament. On February 26th, 1844, Mr Oastler was invited to address a body of his own friends in Leeds. Mr Summers occupied the chair. In the course of his address, Mr Oastler made the following special allusion to his own position and that of the ministry on the factory question: "There does want something doing. Yes, my friends, I rejoice that I have come out at such a time. The government, too, confess that something must be done. We, therefore, of the old Ten Hours' Bill school are still in our places—to tell them, that if they

will not adopt some measure or other to regulate machinery: machinery which, being unregulated in its operations, has already destroyed its tens of thousands, nay, its millions of the operative classes; which has destroyed its tens of thousands of the middle classes, and which is now destroying its hundreds even of the higher classes of manufacturers, must go on, if unrestricted and unregulated, until one successful manufacturer shall possess himself of the whole; and when he has acquired his accumulated millions, we can tell him, that he will find no happiness in his wealth, but he will be more miserable in the possession of his millions, than he was when he only possessed a few thousands. Well, then, my friends, we stand upon the same ground we ever did; and we offer to the country the Ten Hours' Bill —the simple, plain, efficient Ten Hours' Bill, unaccompanied by inspectors, superintendents, or any other government officers, who, let me tell you, are always the spies of the government. Let the stoppage of the moving power be enacted, or let the clauses for personal punishment to the millowners who shall wilfully break the law be adopted, and we can do without inspectors." Mr Oastler stated many reasons why a Ten Hours' Bill should be adopted. The voice of Sir James Graham in the House of Commons, and that of Richard Oastler in Yorkshire, sounded very differently: the latter did not at this time contemplate a renewal of factory agitation, but, with Lord Ashley, Mr Fielden, and Mr Ferrand, in parliament, a discussion of the merits of the Ten Hours' Bill was a certainty. Lord Ashley's intention of moving an amendment in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill, was speedily made known throughout the manufacturing districts, and met with the enthusiastic approval of the factory operatives.

On March the 5th, a meeting of millowners, overlookers, and others was convened in the Temperance Hall of Bradford, in Yorkshire. The proceedings at this meeting, because of

the high social standing of the principal speakers, commanded much attention. Joshua Pollard, Esq., a West Riding magistrate, occupied the chair. Mr Pollard unites in his own person many of the elements of influence in England. He is the representative of an ancient and influential Yorkshire family; as a magistrate, a very impartial and strict administrator of the law; a shareholder and manager of the Bowling Iron Works, and, consequently, a large employer of labour. Mr Pollard is a thorough Yorkshireman, proud of his own country, careful of family honour, very hospitable to his poorer neighbours, by whom he is much beloved. He is a churchman and tory; socially, he is very tolerant, but devoted to principle, and, in political conflicts, proclaims fearlessly his own convictions. These are ingredients of character and position which, in the West Riding, give to their possessor a high moral influence. Mr Pollard has often presided over Ten Hours' Bill meetings. "That it is the duty of a government to watch with a father's eye over the moral and physical interests of its labouring classes," is, with him, a standing maxim. He, as chairman of the Bradford meetings, strenuously recommended adhesion to the Ten Hours' Bill, and, assured his hearers, that Mr Oastler's release from prison was an "augury of success." "I cannot but believe," said Mr Pollard, "that he who, side by side with the venerated Sadler, fought the battles of the poor factory child, in years long gone by, released at this important crisis, will be the instrument in the hands of a merciful Providence to carry out a triumphant success in the achievement of a Ten Hours' Factory Bill; and I sincerely pray that such may be the result."

Mr Wm. Walker and Mr Wm. Rand, both manufacturers of influence, urged on the meeting the necessity for a Ten Hours' Bill. The Rev. Dr Scoresby, the vicar of Bradford, supported by the Rev. J. Cooper, the Rev. W. Sherwood, and the Rev. W. Morgan, addressed the meeting in favour of a Ten Hours' Bill. Dr Scoresby main-

tained "that the great evil of this country, was the vast exertions of individuals to get wealth; that the injury done to our population was great, and that, consequently, the real blessings of wealth were not enjoyed to an extent consistent with the welfare of all; he approved of the factory regulation as a remedial measure." Not any man was better able to judge of the evils of the factory system than was the Rev. Doctor; he had investigated these evils closely, and was anxious for their removal. The Rev. J. Cooper affirmed, from his own experience, "that long hours of labour seriously affected all the domestic relations of life, and left the labourers so worn out, both bodily and mentally, that they had not the power, nor had they the time, for moral and religious improvement. The Sabbath day was much neglected through this system of long hours in the factories. The factory labourers now, to a considerable extent, instead of making Sunday a day of rest, made it one for bodily rest only, and the soul was left to starve altogether; and there should certainly be a restriction on the labour of at least all young persons, in order that this evil system should be put an end to." Similar sentiments were expressed by the other clergymen present, which were very heartily approved, and responded to, by the working men. This union of Christian ministers, county magistrates, influential millowners, and oppressed factory operatives, for one common object, was significant, and proved how successfully the teachings of the earlier advocates of factory regulation had impregnated the public mind.

The meeting at Bradford was followed by similar meetings at Leeds and Manchester. On March the 9th, the Leeds meeting was convened in the music hall, presided over by Mr Joshua Hobson, and was addressed by some of the principal clergymen and medical men of the borough. The Rev. Dr Hook, the vicar of Leeds, seconded a resolution in support of a Ten Hours' Bill, in a speech of much

ability;—his observations on the connection between reasonable and regular hours of labour, and the mental and moral elevation of working men, are deserving of special attention. The Rev. Vicar said :—"I have turned my mind more especially to the mental question. Now we hear on all sides much talk about the education of the people; but where is the use of teaching people to read and write and think, unless you give them time also for mental cultivation? I, for one, shall always be desirous of contending for leisure time for the rational enjoyment of the working classes. We see the middle classes toiling hard, working very hard, but even they always find time for recreation and for enjoyment; and why should not all of us labour to obtain this right, this privilege, for the working classes also? I think we ought never to rest contented until, in every business where it is practicable, in every mill where it is practicable, we should supply the place of children and females by men capable of doing the work. It is impossible to train children in the way they ought to go, unless we have more time to train them; and it is demoralising to witness the system which now prevails in most of the manufacturing districts. It is contrary to nature that children should be the bread-winners of the family. Fathers ought to support their families; and it is a monstrous thing to find families supported by the labour of little children, the parents being, perhaps, all the while idle. Children who have supported their parents for a time, soon cease to have any regard for that commandment which requires them to honour their parents; they soon assert their own independence, and take their own course, and, from being disobedient children, they soon became disloyal members of the state. There is another thing that we cannot insist upon too much, namely, that wherever it is practicable (and I say wherever practicable, because I am told that there are some places where it is not prac-

ticable), we ought to have men to suppl the place of women. Let me ask, *how* is the process of civilisation to go on if men have not happy homes? Why is it that men so often resort to the alehouse rather than to their own homes? Because, their wives being otherwise engaged, there is no home prepared to receive them. The business of woman, is to make home comfortable and happy for man, after he has earned sufficient for the support of his family; not by over-working, but with such a moderate amount of labour as will enable him to prepare his mind to give instruction to his children. Those are the objects which I think we now have in view. We are come here for the purpose of advancing one step, if we can, in the furtherance of those great ends. Our desire, our object, is to have the men of the working-classes not over-worked; to emancipate the children and females. We are assembled, therefore, to assist human nature under its most helpless and most lovely form ; and I think that, engaged in such a cause, we are labouring not only for the promotion of man's happiness, but for the promotion also of God's glory."

This comprehensive and reasonable view of the working-man's interests was ably supported by the Rev. T. Nunns, incumbent of St Paul's, Leeds, who also maintained that the Ten Hours' Bill was a wise and humane suggestion, and would, in practice, be found beneficial for the rich and the poor. "He asserted that it would benefit the millowners, because it would contribute towards making them humane, and not avaricious. The Ten Hours' Bill system was calculated to make men love each other. It would make the millowners feel more than at present for their fellow-creatures, instead of having their hearts steeled by the love of filthy lucre—a love, which God had declared to be idolatry."

The Manchester meeting, as reported in the *Manchester Courier* of March the 16th, and other newspapers, had features in common with those of Bradford and Leeds. It

was held in the Corn Exchange, and presided over by a faithful and long-tried friend of the Ten Hours' Bill movement, Mr J. Gregory, who was supported by the Rev. C. D. Wray, the sub-dean of Manchester; by the Rev. W. Huntington, rector of St John's; the Rev. T. R. Bentley, incumbent of St Matthew's, and one or two dissenting ministers. The Rev. C. D. Wray, on moving the first resolution, said:—"With respect to the object of the meeting, so important to all the working classes, not only of this country, but wherever the factory system was known, no one who had a human heart, and could feel at all for human suffering, could refuse to support it; certainly when he called to mind the numbers of poor children who, at such a tender age, were working in the heated atmosphere of factories, and who, on coming out, with the snow perhaps on the ground, themselves but scantily clad, were exposed to the most trying alternations. The physical strength of these children was exhausted long before they came to manhood; and, therefore, even in a political sense, it would be for the national benefit that these children should not be put to work so early. The effect of this system on females was, frequently, to incapacitate them for the duties of after life; if they became wives and mothers, they were frequently worn out before they were forty years of age. In visiting a Sunday school child, a week or two ago, he found her one of the most diminutive objects of her age he had ever seen, and absolutely in a consumption. She worked in a factory, and on his expostulating with the mother against her being sent so young, the answer was: 'Unless we send them at a certain age, they will not take them at all; and we cannot live without their labour.' This he had himself seen in Salford. He had frequently lamented that any persons should work more than twelve hours a day,—the period assigned by Scripture, and out of this, proper intervals for meals should be allowed. He did not blame the masters, the whole system was bad.

When children were taken into the factories at so tender an age, how were they to be educated? If men were designed for this world alone, and had to do nothing but work, this would be all very well; but mankind needed to be instructed in their duty to God and each other; and *how* could children be taught, if they were made to work twelve hours a day?"

Among the speakers at these meetings, in Leeds and Manchester, was Mr B. Jowett, the personal friend of Mr Sadler, and the intimate fellow-labourer of Lord Ashley. Mr Jowett's knowledge of the progress of the factory question was very great, and his devotion to the interests of humanity was intense. When addressing the Manchester meeting, he said:—

"The first mover of a Ten Hours' Bill was the first Sir R. Peel. It will be found, by a reference to *Hansard's Debates*, that when he first mentioned this measure, he spoke of it as a Ten Hours' Bill. He subsequently brought in what was called a Twelve and a Half Hours' Bill, intending that there should be ten and a half hours for labour, one and a half hours for meals, and half an hour for education. That bill he prosecuted with all the energy of his powerful mind; and so much had he it at heart, that after giving evidence before a select committee of the House of Commons, not content with the oral testimony he had given, he presented a memorial to that committee, in which he left on record his opinion that if the factory system was not duly regulated, it would become the bitterest curse of the country. That bill, unfortunately, was so materially altered in its progress through parliament that instead of a Ten and a Half Hours', it became a Twelve Hours' Bill; but for ten and a half hours Sir R. Peel asked, and I will ask you, whether a Ten Hours' Bill would now give you the relief that a Ten and a Half Hours' Bill would have done then? What has been the progress with regard to the spinner? How many spindles

had he to attend to in the time of the first Sir R. Peel, in 1815 for instance, and how has that number since increased? How was the speed of the machinery increased? Do the children travel more or less than they did at that time? It was stated by the spinners of Manchester some years ago, and the subject was afterwards discussed in the House of Commons, that the children in the mills at Manchester, working twelve hours a day, in spinning what you would call from 36's to 40's, were liable to walk in the mill, traversing backwards and forwards, from twenty to twenty-four miles in the day. That statement was disputed, and several members of parliament connected with the factory system corroborated it. Still those facts remained upon the mind of Lord Ashley, as so important, that he requested a very eminent actuary, Mr Woolhouse, to come down into the manufacturing districts, and make the calculation. That gentleman, who had been introduced to Lord Ashley as the second mathematician in the country, came down into Lancashire; and with his watch in his hand, accurately measured the distances, he calculated the ground over which those young persons had to travel, he not only corroborated the statement of the spinners of Manchester, but proved that the distance was greater than they had stated—namely, from fourteen to thirty-two miles, according to the fineness of the thread they were employed upon. There was another investigation which Mr Woolhouse made for Lord Ashley. A great deal had been said about the tables of mortality attached to the report of the select committee, of which Mr Sadler was chairman; and Mr Drinkwater had attempted to call them in question. The late Michael Thomas Sadler employed some of the last months of his life in corroborating and confirming those tables. And the pamphlet was published after his death, in which he completely vindicated them. Still, Lord Ashley never made any use of those

tables till Mr Woolhouse had investigated the subject, wishing that it should be investigated by an unprejudiced person; and he came to the conclusion that the opinion Mr Sadler had formed was correct, and that the mortality of Leeds (the town in which Mr Sadler had lived) was such, according to the census of 1831, that it required two thousand fresh inhabitants to Leeds, annually, to keep up the numbers. Mr Drinkwater had felt that the rate of mortality, according to the tables, was enormous, and had spoken of it in the strongest terms; but he had denied the correctness of Mr Sadler's tables, which was subsequently established by Mr Woolhouse. Well, then, you are asking nothing but what is reasonable, and if you only go on with the same unanimity that there has been in Yorkshire, you will carry the question.

"I am happy to see the progress it is making. In Yorkshire, two years ago, a petition for a Ten Hours' Bill was signed by 294 manufacturers. In Lancashire it is notorious that this question is advancing, even among the millowners themselves, and I am confident that their interests are most deeply involved in it. This first resolution which I am called upon to support is for a plain Ten Hours' Bill. Now, it is to be remembered, that the relay system is not the system Mr Sadler recommended, nor the system that the first Sir R. Peel recommended. Sir Robert was decidedly of opinion that such a system would not operate well, and this resolution says it has been found impracticable in many parts of the country. I will give you an idea of the extent to which it has been found impracticable. The relay system has hardly been acted upon in Scotland at all; and the certificate system, which has been hitherto adopted, for ascertaining whether young persons were thirteen years of age, has been so very lax, that Mr Horner, the inspector for this district, has stated, in his report, that full one-half of the children who were working as thirteen years of age

were only eleven. Thus the children of eleven have not been protected; the law has said that they shall be protected, by their labour being limited to eight hours a day, but many of them have been working the full period of twelve hours. The interests of both millowners and workpeople are most deeply interested in having a more equal distribution of labour over the whole of the year."

Both these meetings were addressed at great length by Mr Oastler, who, though in shattered health, was anxious to urge the question onward to a final settlement. The speakers at those meetings, and especially Mr Oastler, thanked the government for the manifest progress shown in their own bill, which was decidedly in advance of any previously proposed governmental measure. He and others contended, however, that there could not be any satisfactory settlement except by the passing of a Ten Hours' Bill. The public mind, for obvious reasons, apprehends much more clearly a defined object than a series of details; in a public movement, the reiteration of one "cry" exercises a wonderful influence, a circumstance which "the king of the factory children" very thoroughly appreciated. It was hoped that these meetings would have weight with parliament. The factory question was understood to be an open one in the cabinet, it was, therefore, thought possible that the pressure of public opinion would, probably, have influence with some of the cabinet ministers.

The Government Factories' Bill, which, in the House of Commons, had, on the 12th of February, been read a second time, was expected to be again under discussion. The supporters and opponents of the Ten Hours' Bill were unusually active, and the future proceedings in parliament were awaited with much anxiety by all the parties interested.

The subjects of factory labour and factory regulation were under the consideration of the House of Commons, on March the 15th and 18th; the debates which ensued,

called forth much practical talent on both sides, and the regulation of factory labour was evidently understood by all parties, as being of the highest importance, and the question at stake, not only one of detail but of principle. Lord Ashley moved, that in the second clause of the bill, the word "night" shall be taken to mean from six o'clock in the evening to six o'clock in the following morning. The intention of which motion was practically to limit the working hours of factory labour to ten per day. The word "night," in the government bill, was defined to mean from eight o'clock in the evening to six in the morning; the object of which definition was to limit the working hours of factory labour to twelve per day.

The committee divided on the question that the word "eight" stand part of the clause, Lord Ashley having moved, that it be struck out, in order to substitute the word "six:"—ayes, 170 ; noes, 179 : majority 9.

The word "eight" having been struck out, the committee again divided on the question, that the word "six" be inserted —ayes, 161 ; noes, 153: majority, 8. This decision was, in effect, and was considered by the government to be, "a virtual adoption of a Ten Hours' Bill."

On March the 22nd, the subject was renewed, and a discussion of great excitement and interest followed. The committee divided on the question that the blank in the bill be filled with the word "twelve," relating to the hours of labour—ayes, 183; noes, 186: being a majority of three in favour of a Ten Hours' Bill.

The committee again divided on the question, that the blank be filled up with the word "ten"—ayes, 181; noes, 188: majority of seven against the Ten Hours' Bill. This neutralising result was produced by Mr W. Aldam, Captain M. Archdall, Mr W. Ewart, and Mr G. Palmer, having voted with the "noes" on both divisions.

The House of Commons, having thus decided against a

Ten Hours' and a Twelve Hours' Bill, Sir James Graham suggested a postponement of all further proceedings, until Monday, and Lord Ashley, after having assured the House of Commons of the respect he entertained for its deliberative judgment, used the expressive words:—"But, though defeated now, I have a right, which I shall endeavour to exert on every legitimate occasion. I shall persevere to the last hour of my existence, and I have not the slightest doubt, that with the blessing of Heaven, I shall have a complete triumph."

On March the 25th, Sir James Graham explained to the House of Commons, at considerable length, his views, and those of his colleagues, on the critical position of the factory question. The subject and the circumstances were of interest. Sir James reviewed the state of the question, as regarded the interests of the country, and the position of ministers and Lord Ashley, and concluded by moving: "That the order of the day for the house resolving itself into committee on the Factories' Bill be now read," which, after a protracted debate, ended in a postponement until Friday. On the 29th March, the question was again under the reconsideration of the house, and after a debate, and explanations on both sides, the government bill was withdrawn, on the understanding that another should be substituted in its place. On the same evening, Sir James Graham moved for leave to bring in the new Factories' Bill, the objects of which he explained at length. Leave having been given, the bill was brought in, and read a first time.

In the course of these discussions in the House of Commons, Sir Charles Wood, the member for Halifax, and an opponent of all factory regulation, made a statement to the effect, that the manufacturing operatives were not really in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill; an assertion which ministers made much of, but one which was not likely to remain long unanswered. On April the 8th,

1844, Mr Oastler, addressing a public meeting in Leeds, said: 'There are individuals in the House of Commons who, after the sanction which a majority gave to the Ten Hours' Bill, have dared to assert, that parliament has been taken by surprise, and, also that the factory operatives are not for the Ten Hours' Bill. Why, I have been, during the last fourteen or fifteen years of my life, in every factory town of Yorkshire and Lancashire, year after year, asking the assembled thousands and tens of thousands, and in one case 150,000 of these poor operatives, whether they were for the Ten Hours' Bill or not, and the Ten Hours' Bill has been enthusiastically passed, and unanimously too, save on two occasions—once I remember to have seen three hands held up against it, and once two. Yet, we are to be told by persons who pretend to represent the manufacturing operatives in parliament, that the manufacturing operatives are not in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill. And ministers, too ready to lay hold of any straw by which they can adhere to the oppressive measure of twelve hours, gave more credence to the assertions of those persons than to the loud petitions and urgent requests of the hosts of friends whom we have in and out that house. Well, hearing that the decision of the House of Commons had been unconstitutionally rescinded—for, I maintain, let others assert what they may, that it is unconstitutional in any minister, after a decision had been taken in the House of Commons, to attempt forthwith to reverse that decision—hearing that such an unconstitutional mode had been taken to destroy the effect of the vote in our favour, I was waited upon by a deputation of the Short Time Committee, and asked to tell them what I thought should be done in this emergency. I was glad when they came to see me; I was sorry for the cause. I knew that there was, as Sir James Graham has said, 'inextricable confusion' in the House of Commons. I knew that the government had got themselves into inextricable

difficulties, and that the best way of unravelling all those intricacies would be, as I had always done, to go to the people who were most interested, and ask them what they thought about it; and therefore I suggested that, instead of going through the manufacturing districts, and attending the *soirees* which were projected in my honour, I should throw my own individuality overboard, and that we should hold public meetings in every factory town of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and let the operatives speak for themselves. That, my friends, is the reason why you to-night are called together to speak for the town of Leeds." The Leeds meeting was presided over by the Rev. Dr Hook. The Bradford meeting was held on the 9th; the Huddersfield meeting on the 10th, and in rapid succession meetings were held in the more important towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire, at each of which was asked the question: "Are you in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill?" The answer was in the affirmative. Through the medium of the press Sir Charles Wood was challenged to make good his parliamentary assertion; Mr Fielden specially challenged Sir Charles to meet him at Halifax,—the former was present according to promise; the Hon. Baronet was absent. Those meetings were adjudged to be of the highest importance, and special reports thereof appeared day after day in the columns of the *Times*, which reports were read with attention in the manufacturing districts, and by those who watched public proceedings; for the moment, the national mind was concentrated on the factory question. At those meetings Mr Oastler was the principal speaker; a perusal of the speeches then delivered by him would convince even the most sceptical as to his ability. The *Times* reporter, a gentleman of education and of great professional experience, said: "I have never before known such an extraordinary exhibition of versatility on one subject." One effect of Mr

Oastler's imprisonment was an improvement in mind, which, united with the increased responsibility now attached to his words, caused him to be careful in expression, while it detracted nothing from mental energy, and very much elevated the tone of his discourse. The speeches made in parliament against the Ten Hours' Bill were closely examined at these meetings, and the parliament and the people were kept, through the columns of the press, face to face, on the factory question.

The impressive character of the agitation was increased by the important part taken by the clergy. Dr Hook, of Leeds, Dr Scoresby, of Bradford, the Rev. Mr Nunns, of St Paul's, Leeds, the Rev. C. D. Wray, sub-dean of Manchester, Rev. Mr Albutt, the vicar of Dewsbury, set before their brethren in the church a noble example, which, was well followed up; medical men, tradesmen, operatives, *all* told their experience, and all united in one common verdict against the government, and in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill. Mr Ferrand, Mr Walter, and Mr Fielden, gave to the movement the benefit of their labours, and, by common consent, it was agreed that there should not be "permanent peace until the Ten Hours' Bill was law." The editor of the *Times* wrote with decision on the question, and gave to the operatives' view of their own case, the influence of his authority, and opposed the government with much power. This agitation enlightened the public mind, and concentrated it on a fixed purpose.

The government watched these proceedings closely, changed its tone, and strengthened itself in the House of Commons, by considering the factory question as a party one, and making it known that defeat would be considered just ground for resignation; a stroke of policy which had due effect on the minds of many members. The second reading of the Government Factories' Bill was taken on April the 22nd,

a brief discussion followed; it was understood by both parties that the question should be tested in its future stages through parliament.

The government was strengthened by the policy of Mr Roebuck, who having at all times bitterly opposed factory regulation, very consistently raised the question of the wisdom of parliament interfering with adult labour, by moving for a resolution of the whole house before going into committee on the Factories Bill :—

"That it is the opinion of this house, that no interference with the power of adult labourers in factories, to make contracts respecting the hours for which they shall be employed, be sanctioned with this house." In the debate which followed, all the old arguments for and against government interference were reproduced, and the discussion, although conducted on both sides with great ability, did not evoke any novel features, nor change the opinion of the house as to the desirableness of factory regulation; the question had, in fact, ceased to be, with the majority of the members of both houses, one of principle, and was considered, in fact, as one of degree.

On May the 6th, some clauses of the bill were considered in committee.

On May the 10th, the bill having been read a third time, Lord Ashley closed an elaborate speech by moving the following clause :—

"And be it enacted, that from and after the 1st day of October in the present year, no young person shall be employed in any factory more than eleven hours in any one day, or more than sixty-four hours in any one week; and that, from and after the 1st day of October, 1847, no young person shall be employed in any factory more than ten hours in any one day, or more than fifty-eight hours in any one week : and that any person who shall be convicted of employing a young person for any longer time than is in and

by this clause permitted, shall for every such offence be adjudged to pay a penalty of not less than *l.*, and not more than *l.*"

In the above clause the word "young person" refers to all between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

The debate which followed was sustained with great ability, and adjourned. It was resumed on the 13th; the house had from habit become familiar with the question, every phase of which was considered, and opinions of the most conflicting kind urged with confidence by opposing speakers.

The house divided—ayes, 159; noes, 297 : majority for the government, 138.

Among the names of the minority were Lord John Russell and the Right Hon. T. B. Macaulay; the former supported the Ten Hours' Bill clause of Lord Ashley, by a speech in which he frankly confessed that his opinions had undergone a change. The conversion of these two important leaders of the great whig party was important.

On the question that the bill do pass the house divided —ayes, 136 ; noes, 7 : majority, 129.

The bill was read a second time in the House of Lords on May the 20th, was discussed in committee on May 31st, and read a third time on Juné the 3rd. The principal opponent being Lord Brougham, who protested against the principle of the measure with all the energy for which the noble and learned lord is remarkable.

The perseverance and steadfastness of the leaders of the factory movement was bearing legitimate fruit. The position of rival sections in the House of Commons no doubt contributed to increase the force of the Ten Hours' Bill party ; the two rival chiefs in the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell, had used the factory question to injure each other in turn, but the speech and vote of Lord John Russell were too important easily or readily,

on any future occasion, to admit of retraction. Lord John Russell was now pledged to Ten Hours per day, as the limit to which factory labour might be advantageously reduced. The vote of Mr Macaulay was equally marked, and not less important; former opponents felt that after these examples, to make a concession, notwithstanding past declarations, was not discreditable. It would be uncharitable to suppose that the serious effects which had followed the vacillating policy of the whigs, on the factory question, were without effect on the mind of Lord John Russell, and could not fail to be appreciated by Mr Macaulay. These effects, the persevering efforts and ability of the leaders of the factory question, and the changed position of parties in the House of Commons, are circumstances sufficient in themselves to account for the progress of the question in parliament.

The House of Commons had yielded an undignified assent to the demand of the ministers, and this, too, in opposition to a repeated vote in favour of a Ten Hours' Bill. The conscience and judgment of the house were opposed to those of Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham, who, on the factory question, led the cabinet. This palpable contradiction between the opinions and votes of the House of Commons was a twofold testimony; it was evidence of the growth of public opinion, and of the power of ministers over the House of Commons. The strenuous opponents of the factory question became forthwith the opponents of the Peel administration, who, on the other hand, were supported with additional ardour by the ultra-section of political economists. The importance of the numerous and influential meetings held in the country in support of the Ten Hours' Bill, it was impossible to deny; the moral certainty of final success was, to many minds, equally apparent. The policy of Sir Robert Peel's cabinet was evidently to conciliate "the Manchester men," who

were known to be in the ascendant on the question of free trade. A change in the ministry was therefore desired by the advocates of the Ten Hours' Bill, a desire consistent with their position, and founded upon an acute knowledge of the motives of politicians. This result accomplished, it was anticipated that another renewed and spirited effort might prove successful.

Among the many friends of the factory children, there was not one who supported the cause more earnestly, and whose influence was more felt, than Mr Richard Oastler. In his conflict for the emancipation of the factory children, Mr Oastler, whose chief happiness was in the enjoyment of pure domestic pleasures, always found in his wife a true helpmate. He even boasts that in that strife, Mrs Oastler was his mainstay; but for her, he declares he could not have withstood the powerful and malignant opposition from his opponents—the more painful separation from friends. From first to last, in the wife of his youth he found a ready, an efficient helper. When the storm of persecution raged most furiously—when best friends forsook—her calmness and fortitude, her constancy and self-sacrifice, her never-tiring solicitude, and never-failing affection—her unbounded reliance on the Arm unseen, joined with her entire disregard of consequences to herself—never failed to inspire her husband with hope—always restored his confidence.

Mrs Oastler was of delicate frame—her manners were gentle, unassuming, and retiring—but, in the cause of truth, she was bold and unflinching, entirely divested of self-seeking; she was affectionately devoted to relieving the despised and neglected poor. She secured the love of all who knew her.

For twenty-eight years, Mrs Oastler was a sharer of her husband's joys and sorrows. Deceit, malice, or jealousy, had not any place in her breast. She was frank, generous,

sincere, and confiding; never so happy, as when, at any sacrifice to herself, she could increase the happiness of others. Her religion was unostentatious—"pure and undefiled:" and so, her faith and trust in God never failed.

Next to her God, she loved "her own Richard,"—on her he could always rely. Their happiness was unbroken—whatever storms outside might rage.

In his labours for the poor factory children, she more than sympathised. Night and day, cheering, helping, and comforting him in the prosecution of his overwhelming labours. Writing for him, sometimes through the night—and day by day, when he was weary, exhausted, absent, or, on the bed of sickness, Mrs Oastler never allowed the great work to stand still. She would take up his pen, and continue his public and private correspondence, where he had left off; she would read back a few sentences, ascertain his thoughts, and then finish his argument or directions, none being able to detect that another mind or hand had been engaged, so entirely, as in all other things, were their style and handwriting one.

Returning home late at night, or at early morn, wearied and exhausted by his "factory labours," Mr Oastler was sure to find his wife attending with every comfort and kindness—and when refreshed, she would listen with anxious attention to his report of proceedings; they were as deeply interesting to herself as to her husband.

Mrs Oastler always welcomed to Fixby Hall the friends of the Ten Hours' Bill, differing on many other subjects from some—*that* was their bond of union. Sometimes, with meekness and softened affection, she would warn her husband to be guarded—being fearful, lest his strong devotion to "the great question" might cause him to associate too freely with those whom, she thought, were not "God-fearing men."

With the people, especially with those nearest home,

Mrs Oastler was a great favourite. They daily saw her "going about doing good."

Bashful and timorous as, by nature, Mrs Oastler was, when she believed her presence could rebut the slanders of his foes (among other reports they told, that, "Mrs Oastler's life was made miserable by her husband"), she would appear, side by side, with him, in public processions, or on the hustings—then, the sincere devotion of the people to "the Queen," was manifested, in such terms as Yorkshiremen, women, and children, are wont to greet their best beloved! Happy was the working man whom Mr Oastler requested, "to take charge of his wife from the hustings—through the crowd,"—eager was every one to cheer and make way for "the Queen."

When forsaken by his chiefest friend—whom they both loved most ardently—it was thus that Mrs Oastler addressed her almost despairing husband; "Never mind, Richard! It is God's work! Only stand firm yourself, though all forsake! God will provide." And, when his character was assailed, Mrs Oastler would smile and say, "Poor things—they do not know you. They can never change my opinion of my own Richard! Go on, my love—trusting in God! He will take care of your character." When poverty seemed to be the certain consequence of Mr Oastler's proceedings, Mrs Oastler would say, "Poverty, with God's blessing, will be our greatest riches. Let us be poor and despised, rather than that you, for my sake, should slacken your efforts in the great work which I am sure God has put into your hands. Come what may—God will be our friend, while we strive to do his work, trusting in him." Yes, Mrs Oastler was, indeed, Mr Oastler's mainstay!

The faithful wife, followed her persecuted husband to prison—she consoled, helped, and nourished him *there!*

She lived to witness his release, and to express her gratitude to his deliverers. She died in peace, at Headingley, near Leeds, July 12, 1845—just when the sun of prosperity seemed to be rising on her husband—to set upon her grave !

Mrs Oastler's remains were buried in Kirkstal churchyard. The bodies of their infants, Sarah and Robert (having been buried in Leeds), were, at the same time, placed in the same grave ; where "the old king" has been heard to say, he hoped his bones may rest.

CHAPTER XV.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN 1846.—OPINIONS OF THE OPPONENTS OF THE TEN HOURS' BILL.—MR MACAULAY'S OPINION IN SUPPORT THEREOF.

ONE of the effects of the extraordinary exertions of the Anti-Corn Law League was a conviction on the minds of many leading statesmen, and among these Sir James Graham, that England had passed that state of national existence in which her prosperity mainly depended on agriculture; so rooted was this opinion in the mind of some among the free-trade party, that they ventured to declare that, were the whole surface of these islands covered with lava, no real national loss would be sustained, they anticipating that more than a compensation would be found in the increase of our foreign trade, consequent on the opening of British ports to foreign grain, duty free, and the application of the scientific, chemical, mechanical, and manual powers of the country to purposes of manufacture and commerce. The experience of late years has thoroughly dissipated this opinion; under the operation of high prices during the war with Russia, agriculture has made such decided progress, that its importance is at a premium, and now, as of old, "speed the plough," is a popular sentiment. A reference to the past is necessary to explain the proceedings of some among the opponents of the Ten Hours' Bill in parliament;

these refused all further concession, under the belief that a further reduction in the hours of factory labour would endanger our national interests. Among other supporters of the free-trade party were those who pledged themselves to vote for a Ten Hours' Bill, so soon as free trade in corn was established; these assumed that the reduced price of bread, and the increase of foreign exchange, would fully warrant a reduction of the hours of factory labour; others of the free-trade party were of opinion that, were the corn laws once repealed, the demand for labour would be so great "that three masters would bid for two men, and no Ten Hours' Bill would be demanded, because it would not be required." Every great popular movement begets a mental activity in a free state, and whether right or wrong in its object, brings into collision opposing intellectual forces; the successful and the unsuccessful party are alike apt to hazard decided prophecies, which time in most cases proves to have been not well-founded. The repeal of the corn laws was a source of high gratification to the commercial classes generally, and was, on the part of the late Sir Robert Peel, a concession to the expressed will of the nation. The immediate satisfaction resulting therefrom, and also the state of parties, were favourable to the renewal of popular and parliamentary efforts on the factory question, and the opportunity was not likely to pass unimproved with Oastler in the provinces, Ashley, Fielden, and Ferrand in the House of Commons.

On Jan. 29, 1846, Lord Ashley consequently reintroduced, to the notice of the House of Commons, the Ten Hours' Bill; circumstances, in addition to those already named, contributed in some respects to favour the noble lord's intentions. The mind of the country and of parliament had been expressed in favour of Ten Hours a day, as the limit of the labour of women and young persons in factories; experiments had been made by Mr Gardiner, of Preston, and

others, of working factories eleven hours per day, being one hour less than the law specified; the results were in all respects favourable to a further reduction of the hours of factory labour. Mr Gardiner wrote: "I am quite satisfied that both as much yarn and power-loom cloth may be produced, at quite as low a cost, in eleven as in twelve hours a day." "All the arguments I have heard in favour of long time appear based on an arithmetical question; if eleven hours produce so much, what will twelve, thirteen, or even fifteen hours produce? This is correct so far as the steam engine is concerned; whatever it will produce in eleven hours, it will produce double the quantity in twenty-two; but try this on the animal—horse—and you will soon find he cannot compete with the engine, as he requires time both to rest and feed. It is, I believe, a fact not to be questioned, that there is more bad work made the last one or two hours, than the whole of the first nine or ten hours." All experience from those countries in which the hours of labour in factories had been reduced, united in showing considerable improvement in the character and habits of those under its operation. Lord Ashley collected, with a persevering industry, the important facts favourable to his own proposition; he was promptly and ably supported by Lord John Manners, Mr Wakley, Mr Fielden, and others. Sir James Graham met the motion with all the interest of the Peel administration, and urged strongly "that to carry interference further in its application to capital and labour, was a dangerous experiment in a country dependent, for much of its prosperity, on its commercial and manufacturing resources." Sir James was supported by the late Mr Joseph Hume, who, throughout a long parliamentary career, consistently opposed all interference with labour by law, as being wrong in principle; Mr John Bright acted in concert with Mr Hume and Mr Roebuck; Sir James Graham, as an act of courtesy to the motives and high

position of Lord Ashley, as, on this question, representing a very numerous body of his fellow countrymen, agreed to the introduction and first reading of the bill.

Lord Ashley having retired from parliament, because of his support of Sir Robert Peel's free-trade measures, the future conduct of the factory question in the House of Commons devolved on Mr Fielden. His lordship having been returned for Dorsetshire as a protectionist, and having voted for the repeal of the corn laws, gave to the electors an opportunity of expressing a judgment on his parliamentary conduct; the decision was adverse to his lordship —he was not re-elected.

On April 29th, Mr Fielden having presented twenty-six petitions in favour of the bill, moved its second reading; so important had the question become, that the clergy generally of England and Scotland were petitioning in its support. The Free Church presbytery, in the town of Dundee, having petitioned in favour of the measure, a body of the millowners, members of the free church, remonstrated with the clergy, who answered the complainants in words worthy of record:—"While resolved," said the Free Church ministers, "as opportunity affords, to multiply the means of education, and render more available those already existing, we must be permitted to remind you, that no school education, however protracted, or however excellent, can ever compensate to the female factory operatives between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, for the want of that home education which forms the future housewife and mother. This, we believe, is at the root of most of the social evils of Dundee; and what, but more time at home can provide the cure?" The Free Church clergy of Scotland, then the representatives of the feeling of the country, and popularly esteemed for their secession from the national establishment on a question of conscience, had resolved, with few exceptions, to give to the Ten

Hours' Bill movement their support. Mr Fielden directed his speech to a consideration of the arguments of opponents which he endeavoured to answer, and declared his conviction that the manufacturing supremacy of England would not be endangered by further restriction of the hours of labour in factories. Mr Fielden's position as a successful cotton-spinner stamped every word he uttered with the respect inseparable from high commercial authority.

Mr Hume, while admitting that the sense of the country was against him, "thought it his duty, and the duty of every one who believed the working classes to be in error in holding this opinion [in favour of a Ten Hours' Bill], to stand forward and resist that which, if adopted, would ultimately ruin the best interests of the country. There ought to be no compromise upon it; they should act upon principle, and that would require them to reject the bill." Sir James Graham, in an elaborate speech, in which he urged the importance of the interests at stake, the consequent danger of a false step in legislation, appealed to the house to remember their adoption of free trade, their having resolved to allow the free export of coal and machinery, and cautioned the house to beware of prejudicing the interests of the manufacturers, and avowed the decision of himself and colleagues in the following words :—"There ought to be no hesitation on the part of the executive government, in a question of this kind, and I announce our firm determination to resist the further progress of this bill."

The debate was adjourned.

On Wednesday, May the 13th, the question was again under consideration. In the debate thereon, the principal speakers in support of the measure were Mr Colquhoun, Mr Cowper, Lord John Manners, Sir Robert Inglis, Mr Sharman Crawford, and Mr Brotherton: against the mea-

sure, Mr Labouchere, Mr Dennistoun, Mr Trelawny, and Mr Cardwell. The hour having arrived for the house to break up, no vote was taken.

The adjourned debate on the second reading of the Factories' Bill was resumed on May the 22nd. The speakers on this occasion were Mr Bankes, Mr Ward, Lord G. Bentinck, Viscount Morpeth, Mr Macaulay, Sir J. Hanmer, Mr Bright, Mr B. Denison, the second Sir Robert Peel, Lord John Russell, Mr Cobden, and Mr Muntz—names representing the highest practical talent, and the various parties in the House of Commons. Mr Macaulay and Lord John Russell maintained (the former in a brilliant speech) that it was the duty of the legislature to protect health and morals by restrictive legislation. Mr Macaulay said:

"He was as firmly attached to the principle of free trade as any gentleman in that house, and he admitted that it was not desirable that the state should interfere with the contracts of persons of ripe age and sound mind touching matters purely commercial, but they would fall into error if they applied that rule to matters which were not purely commercial. Take, for instance, one of the questions of police, namely, the regulation of cabs on a stand. If on a very wet day there were but few cabs on a stand, and many persons requiring them, why should not the driver of a cab ask a high price for the accommodation he could afford when persons were willing and glad to give it? Where the health of the community was concerned, the principle of non-interference did not apply. He had read a report issued by the Duke of Buccleuch and the noble earl, the present Secretary for Ireland (the Earl of Lincoln), upon which that noble earl brought in a bill with respect to sanatory regulations, and which, as it applied to the principle of free trade, was a most monstrous production. He found by the act to which he referred, that no person was to build a street unless it was of a certain width, or to erect a house without giving notice to a commissioner;

he must also have a drain, or they would make one for him, and send in the bill. Moreover, if he refused to white-wash his house, they would do it for him, and at his own expense. On the principle of free trade, why should not a man run up a house as cheaply as he could, and let it for as much as he could possibly obtain? He defied them to defend such an act on the principle of free trade, and non-interference. But he had no doubt the noble lord would say, 'there are other interests which are higher than mere commercial interests, and which concern the public weal.' The great masses of the people shall not live in a way that will abridge life, that will make it wretched and feeble while it lasts, and send them to untimely graves, leaving behind them a more miserable progeny than themselves. And who would contend, where the public morality was concerned, that the principle of non-interference should be affirmed. He hoped to carry the house with him thus far—that the principle of non-interference was one that must have great restrictions. Was not the public health, then, concerned in the question of labour? Was not twelve hours a day more than was desirable for a youth or a female to labour? Was not education necessary, and did they believe that after twelve hours' work enough time would remain for that amount of education which they believed the whole of the population ought to possess? The principle on which they interfered to protect public morality justified an interference in matters of this sort.

* * * * * *

"If we consider man simply in a commercial point of view, simply as a machine for productive labour, let us not forget what a piece of mechanism he is,—'how fearfully and wonderfully made!' If we have a fine horse, we do not use him exactly as a steam-engine, and still less should we treat man so, more especially in his earlier years. The depressing labour that begins early in life, and is continued too long every day, enfeebles his

body, enervates his mind, weakens his spirits, overpowers his understanding, and is incompatible with any good and useful result. A state of society in which such a system prevails, will inevitably, and in no long space of time, feel its baneful effects. It will find that the corporal and mental culture of the population cannot be neglected, without producing results detrimental to its best interests, even in regard to accumulation and creation of property. On the other hand, a day of rest regularly recurring every week, and hours of exercise, of leisure, of intellectual improvement, recurring in every day, elevate the whole man—elevate him physically—elevate him intellectually—elevate him morally; and his elevation—physical, moral, and intellectual, again falls on the commercial prosperity of the country, which is advanced with it."

This truly enlightened and philosophical view of the interests of a nation was worthy of an English historian. It is, in substance, a reproduction of the sentiments expressed by Mr Sadler, on introducing the factory question to the attention of parliament. Homage to the memory of Sadler, from so high an authority as Macaulay, was, indeed, honour. The propriety and justness of Mr Macaulay's observations were generally admitted. He was faithful to free trade, as a general principle, but admitted the necessity for so many exceptions, that the force of the rule was much shaken. Well, and wisely, did Mr Macaulay ask, "What is it on which, more than on anything else, the wealth of a nation depends? What is it which makes one community prosperous and flourishing more than another? You will not say that it is the soil—you will not say that it is its climate—you will not say that it is its mineral wealth, or its natural advantages, its ports, or its great rivers. These are things which are very valuable, indeed, when human intelligence and energy use them well; but human intelligence and energy can do much

without them; whereas, without human intelligence and energy they are as nothing. You see countries, that in the highest degree possess all these advantages, with a miserable population—with men having hardly a rag to cover them; while, on the other hand, in the most sterile soils, the greatest human industry and prosperity are to be found. Is it anything in the earth, or in the air, that makes Scotland a richer country than Egypt,—or Batavia, with its marshes, more prosperous than Sicily? No; but Scotchmen make Scotland what she is; and Dutchmen raised their marshes to such eminence. Look to America. Two centuries ago it was a wilderness of buffaloes and wolves. What has caused the change? Is it her rich mould? Is it her mighty rivers? Is it her broad waters? No; her plains were then as fertile as they are now; her rivers were as numerous." Mr Macaulay, treading in the footsteps of Locke, concluded that this mighty revolution had been effected by the labour and energy of man. "The great instrument that produces wealth," continued the orator, "is man; and the vast difference between the climates and natural advantages of Campagna and Spitzbergen, is not to be compared to the difference between a country inhabited by a population in a condition of full physical, moral, and intellectual health, and a country whose inhabitants are in a state of physical, moral, and intellectual degeneracy. These, I believe, are the reasons which explain why the wealth of this country has not been diminished by the observance, century after century, of one day of rest in the week, when your industry seems to be suspended, when your machinery is not at work, but when the machine of machines, man—upon whom everything else depends—is winding up and repairing, so that he returns to his work and labour on the Monday with renovated spirits, with clearer intellect, and with restored physical power. Am I to believe that a change, which would clearly be found to

improve the moral, physical, and intellectual character of the people, could possibly make them poorer?" The answer was in the negative, and Mr Macaulay judiciously concluded, that, to grant, under certain circumstances, protection to public health and morality, was one of the legitimate duties of the British parliament.

Mr Bright was, on principle, opposed to all interference, and prognosticated that the bill, if passed, "would cause, in the first place, an extraordinary delusion, and, in the second place, a fatal disappointment." Mr Cobden spoke of Mr Oastler as "the originator of this agitation;" quoted his evidence, given before the committee of 1832, on the probable result of the bill on wages, to the effect "that it would tend to increase rather than lower wages," an opinion which Mr Cobden thought erroneous. He complained of the leaders amongst the operatives, of the short-time question, having opposed the *League* in the manufacturing districts. "If we found it proved that in this country great numbers of infants were being worked to death, he would step in by law to take them out of the hands of their parents." Beyond this limit Mr Cobden was opposed to regulation by law. He expressed his anxiety that the House of Commons "should not fall into a measure for which the working classes would not thank them, and which might procure them very great unpopularity." Sir Robert Peel was of opinion "that the principles of free trade ought not to control our legislation, provided that, by our interference, we can promote the social comforts, the health, and the morality of the community." He was also of opinion that further interference was, under existing circumstances, undesirable, and begged of the house to refuse its assent to the bill. Lord George Bentinck and his political adherents supported the bill on principle—thought it necessary and desirable. Lord Morpeth was doubtful as to what should be done, but thought delay advisable.

On a division having been taken, the votes for proceeding with Mr Fielden's bill were 193 ; against, 203: majority, against the bill, 10. The second reading was formally postponed for six months.

During the course of these proceedings in parliament, the political excitement of the country was great. The House of Lords had not formally approved of the free-trade measures of the government, but the conviction was decided that free trade was equal to a fact already accomplished. The factory operatives watched the conduct of parliament on the short-time question, with unabated interest, and thoroughly distrusted the prophecies of those who foretold that the change in the commercial policy of the country would render factory legislation unnecessary. The Peel administration and the "Manchester men," were united against Mr Fielden and the principal leaders of the whig party in the House of Commons. The discussion of the question in the Press had proved very advantageous to the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill ; and the speech of Mr Macaulay was acknowledged, by the opponents of the bill, as having been seriously injurious to their view of the case. Mr Macaulay had, at the first election of members to represent the borough of Leeds in parliament under the Reform Act, been successful against Mr Sadler; a principal cause of this success was Mr Sadler's determined support of a Ten Hours' Bill, a measure to which Mr Macaulay was, in 1846, a convert, and which he supported by arguments akin in substance with those used by Mr Sadler in 1832, and with an aptness of illustration greater and more forcible than at the command of any other member of the legislature. Mr Macaulay's conversion had been gradual and complete, and in the capacity of a practical statesman he had fully refuted his early opinions as an *Edinburgh Reviewer*.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHANGE IN THE MINISTRY.—RENEWAL OF FACTORY AGITATION.—PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MR FIELDEN.—ADOPTION OF THE TEN HOURS' BILL BY PARLIAMENT.—MESSRS WOOD AND WALKER, OF BRADFORD.—MANIFESTATIONS OF JOY ON THE PART OF THE OPERATIVES.—ACCEPTANCE OF A GOLD MEDAL BY THE QUEEN.

THE place in the history of his country, which the second Sir Robert Peel may occupy, in the judgment of coming ages, is a problem which time alone can solve; his enthusiastic admirers, and his not less energetic opponents, have expressed their opinions freely; the majority of his own age have pronounced a favourable verdict; his reputation, however, has depended upon concessions; his laurels have been won by yielding rather than by teaching; his mind was a mirror, and it reflected the substance of that which was fullest and strongest for the time being. The second Sir Robert Peel (in this respect honourably distinguished from some among his rivals), while conscious of the responsibility and honour of office, was not disposed to retain these, under the odium of parliamentary defeat.

On the 26th of June, 1846, the Corn and Customs' Bill received the Royal assent, and the free-trade measures of the cabinet became law. On the same day, the motion for the second reading of the Irish Coercion Bill was defeated, by a majority of seventy-three, upon which Sir Robert re-

signed, and the whigs, with Lord John Russell at their head, again possessed the reins of office. In anticipation of the change, Sir Robert said (and his words are worthy of remembrance):—"With the sense of public duties, I am ready to bear its toils and to confront its responsible dangers; but I will not continue to hold this position with mutilated power, or shackled independence. . . . I must reserve to myself to do that unfettered which I believe to be right." The House of Commons, therefore, knew the responsibility of a decision against ministers, and the manly words of Sir Robert Peel gave dignity to his colleagues in their retirement. On the factory question, Sir Robert had taken sides with the opponents of the measure, and Mr Fielden's defeat was the result of ministerial influence. The change in the position of parties was favourable to the success of the Ten Hours' Bill, the premier, Lord John Russell, being pledged to its support.

Mr Fielden was an untiring man, his position as parliamentary leader of the Ten Hours' Bill increased his own sense of his powers, and he and Mr Oastler resolved that there should not be any further delay, — that they should profit by the circumstances of the time, and push forward to victory. In this resolve they were strenuously supported by all the usual leaders of the Ten Hours' Bill party in the country. The one course open was a renewed appeal to public opinion.

Mr Oastler, having been applied to by the central committee for his judgment, as to what ought to be done, suggested a plan of operations, the first condition of which was, "no compromise;" the next, a recommendation for the convening of weekly meetings in every manufacturing town and village;—those to prepare for monthly meetings, and these to be preparatory to public meetings and demonstrations throughout the country. This plan of operarations was, in all its main features, adopted. A general

election was anticipated, members of parliament and candidates for parliamentary honours, were on the alert. Wherever these appeared in the factory districts, they were closely questioned on the Ten Hours' Bill. By way of example, Dr Bowring, an opponent of the bill, addressed his constituents at Bolton on October the 21st. He was asked to state his reasons for opposing the Ten Hours' Bill. So far were these from being satisfactory, that, the opinion of the meeting having been taken on the question, only three hands were held up against the Ten Hours' Bill; the dissentients were Mr G. Ashworth, Mr John Dean, and Mr P. R. Arrowsmith, gentlemen who, with Dr Bowring, believed that all interference with labour was unsound in principle. The majority opposed to them proved how decidedly public opinion was against their views. Mr Bright was then canvassing Manchester, and was very popular with the free-trade and liberal electors; he was questioned, on all fitting occasions, about the Ten Hours' Bill, and having expressed opinions depreciating Mr Oastler's judgment on the question, in common with those of Mr Fielden and Mr Ferrand—Mr Bright having expressed a willingness to discuss the question—Mr Oastler challenged Mr Bright to debate, "in the spirit of calmness and friendship," in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester,—Mr Oastler to maintain the affirmative of the following propositions:—

"1st. That it is a delusion to suppose that the factory children can be educated under the present system of twelve hours' daily labour.

"2nd. That it is a fallacy to suppose that a reduction of the hours of labour from twelve to ten per day will cause a reduction of 'one-sixth or one-seventh' in the wages of persons whose labour is thus reduced."

The mode of arrangement, as regards these propositions, originated in a statement made by Mr Bright, at a meeting of electors of the Chorlton-upon-Medlock district, Manchester.

Mr Bright declined meeting Mr Oastler, " not from any feeling of disrespect for him," but, because he considered that Mr Oastler's opinions were represented in parliament by Mr Fielden and Mr Ferrand, in which place Mr Bright was prepared for controversy. These circumstances serve to illustrate the kind of warfare, in one of its phases, then common between the supporters and opponents of the Ten Hours' Bill. The meetings convened in Lancashire and Yorkshire were numerous, enthusiastic, and unanimous in their decision; Mr Fielden, Mr Oastler, and Mr Ferrand were the principal speakers, the clergy and medical profession gave most influential and powerful assistance; the subject was re-discussed in all its bearings, and the columns of the daily newspapers, morning after morning, contained reports of speeches, and *leaders* on the restriction of labour in factories, the *Times*, *Standard*, *Morning Herald*, and *Morning Post*, taking the lead in favour of the measure, they were supported by the talent and circulation of the weekly journals, with but few exceptions. There was published in Manchester a weekly periodical—*The Ten Hours' Advocate*, edited with much tact by Mr Philip Grant, who had for many years interested himself in the factory question, and who, in early life, had suffered from the evils the supporters of factory regulation desired to remedy. In this weekly periodical was condensed the important public events of the week, connected with factory labour and factory regulation; it, therefore, served the useful purpose of bringing under the notice of its readers the most interesting facts bearing on the question. Mr Grant acted, under the direction of Lord Ashley, with much zeal and ability, and contributed by his energy and talent very materially to further the Ten Hours' Bill cause. Mr Oastler, who has the habit of writing essays in the form of letters to the editors of newspapers, was constantly at work, and his pen did good service.

The firm of John Edwards and Sons, of Halifax, set the country the spirited example of working a large factory ten hours a day. The Edwardses of Halifax had been long conspicuous for their support of the Ten Hours' Bill movement. Mr Henry Edwards (better known as Major Edwards, and who, from 1847 to 1852, represented Halifax in the House of Commons) had often contributed most generously towards the funds of the short-time committee of his own district, and had perseveringly advocated regulation by law. This union of precept and example was most important; Halifax had long been a stronghold of the influential opponents of the Ten Hours' Bill movement, and they had often; exercised undue weight in cabinet councils, through the instrumentality of Sir Charles Wood. The right honourable baronet had, on one notable occasion, *mis*represented the public opinion of Halifax in parliament; his principal supporters were strenuous opponents to the interference of government with the operations of labour and capital, and in their contact with Sir Charles, probably helped to confirm his prejudices and mislead his judgment, as to popular feeling on the question. The prominent example of John Edwards and Sons was specially significant, and served to destroy the genius of evil prophecy, by the opposing practice. "Counsel," says Blackstone, "is only matter of persuasion, law is matter of injunction; counsel acts upon the willing, law upon the unwilling also." "Counsel," supported by such an example—which manifested the fullest possible confidence of the soundness of the ten hours' a day theory, and this too, in the stronghold of opposition, contributed very powerfully to check the force of long-cherished adverse opinion. The act was in keeping with the reputation of the actors, who have richly earned a high character as just, benevolent, and large employers of labour; it was viewed with much satisfaction by Mr Fielden and his principal supporters.

Lord Ashley strengthened the movement by making a tour in Lancashire ; his lordship was everywhere received with enthusiasm, and urged his hearers to action; his lordship reminded them, that his opponents were wont to taunt him about the corn laws, and argue that they formed the obstacle which prevented the passing of a Ten Hours' Bill. "With respect to myself," said his lordship, at a public meeting in Manchester, "I know the arguments I used to encounter, while the corn law was yet in force—how often it was said, 'You are the cause of the long-time vexation ; it is you who are to blame, because, for your own exclusive interest, you keep up the price of bread, and prevent us entering into competition with foreign manufacturers.' I recollect perfectly well one of your present members saying, 'If I vote with the noble lord for the Ten Hours' Bill, will he follow me into the lobby on a division upon a motion for a repeal of the corn laws ?'" His lordship having voted for their repeal, asked for concession in return. This course of reasoning had force on many minds. The noble lord, referring to past labours, said on the same occasion :— "For nearly fourteen years he had had the honour, and, notwithstanding the intense labour and anxiety which it had cost him, he felt great satisfaction in that position to be their representative in parliament, for the attainment of this great and mighty question." Acknowledging the satisfaction he would have had in leading the question in parliament, he counselled his hearers not to relax their efforts, but to give to Mr Fielden all the aid in their power, until he had acquired for them final success. His lordship had undergone severe training and some trials; his words were valued on the Ten Hours' Bill question, and his name was reverenced in the mills and workshops of the north. Mr Fielden was anxious to test the public opinion of Scotland, some of the Scotch members having strenuously opposed the bill, and a belief being current, that Scotland was more

thoroughly pledged to absolute non-interference than England. Scotland has a reputation for an adherence to the free-trade school of political economy, principally from the facts that Adam Smith was born in Kirkaldy; that the *Edinburgh Review* was the organ of his disciples; and that the late Mr Cobbett used to write of the Scotch as "philosophers" and "economists;" he had a gift in giving names, and that they were retained was an evidence of his power. Mr Oastler having been invited by very many working men, of Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow, and Paisley, undertook, with the special approbation of Mr Fielden, a mission to Scotland. No man could have been better adapted for the work; Mr Oastler's strong religious feeling and bold oratory were in keeping with the Scottish character; though apt to calculate consequences, the Scotch are capable of great enthusiasm, and are eminently alive to the bearings of a question argued on religious and moral grounds. Mr Oastler's visit to Scotland was a tour of triumph; he addressed crowded meetings in Glasgow, Paisley, Dundee, and Edinburgh. In the last-named city two meetings were held, and after a full explanation of his mission and objects, the feeling expressed was unanimous in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill. In these meetings the clergy and gentry took part, or supported them by their presence.

Sir John Maxwell, when M.P. for Lanarkshire, had given to every question bearing on the social interests of the working classes his consideration and support. He has for many years maintained, with much ability, the proposition—"The capital of the working man is his labour; the higher the selling price of labour, the better for the interests of society." He endeavoured, when a member of the House of Commons, to establish local boards for the settlement of disputes between the employers and the employed, and assured the legislature that he considered its direct interference, under certain circumstances, a duty.

Factory regulation received Sir John's sincere and hearty support, he therefore willingly presided over the Glasgow meeting. The Paisley meeting was presided over by Mr Ker, an influential manufacturer. Sir James Forrest presided over the Edinburgh meeting. Mr Ferrand was in Edinburgh with Mr Oastler at both meetings. Their speeches were replete with fact and argument, and very efficiently served the interests of the Ten Hours' Bill movement. The opponents of the bill deemed prudence a necessity. The late Dr Chalmers was waited on by Mr Oastler, having been introduced, by letter, from the Rev Mr Lewis, of Dundee. An interesting conversation followed, a portion of which Mr Oastler subsequently published, during which the Doctor used the words—"I am a Christian—free trade must yield to Christianity; I will give my support to the Ten Hours' Bill, although its principle is opposed to that of free trade;" and, immediately thereon, wrote the following letter :—

"Burnside, December 23rd, 1846.

"My dear Sir,

"I have great pleasure in introducing to you Richard Oastler, Esq., the coadjutor of Lord Ashley, and himself a very devoted philanthropist. I should rejoice if he hath a good meeting tomorrow night.

"Please return this letter to him, as it may serve for introducing Mr Oastler to others.

"I ever am, my dear Sir,

"Yours very truly,

"Thomas Chalmers.

"To John Hamilton, Esq."

Among the Doctor's friends were some of the most influential citizens of Edinburgh; his name in Scotland, was "a tower of strength;" his adhesion, therefore, to the Ten Hours' Bill cause was justly esteemed an event of importance. Scotland was evidently as unanimous in support of factory regulation as England. As a fair illustration of

the spirit which pervaded the mind of Scotland on the question, we copy from the newspapers of the time a speech of one of its ablest exponents. The Rev. Dr Grey, at the Edinburgh meeting, on December 28th, 1846, said :— "The facts which had been brought before the meeting were indeed most interesting and affecting. They had responded to them by the expression of their sympathy. It had been impossible to listen to the narration without deep sorrow and distress of mind, and without a feeling of indignation. The circumstances in which the poor, the labouring poor, the operatives, had been reduced, were peculiar. England was considered the richest country in the world, and yet nowhere, he believed, in the world was there so much abject poverty to be found. Lately, when travelling on the continent, he no doubt saw much poverty; but he never witnessed such degrading poverty as might be found even in that town; and, from the account given by Mr Ferrand, the state of things was still worse in the manufacturing districts. Again, England was considered, he believed justly, as the most intelligent country in the world; and yet nowhere did they find the human mind reduced to such a shrivelled state of ignorance. And this, again, was to be attributed to the impossibility of affording education to those poor children who, at the age of seven, were introduced to factory work. England also presented many of the noblest specimens of Christian character ; and yet nowhere did they find vice so rampant, and exhibiting such revolting features. Surely there must be something wrong in the constitution of things, or at least in the arrangements of society. He could not but express a sympathy of feeling with those who regretted the immense differences found, not in rank, not in honours, but in property—the immense disparity in respect of property to be discovered in the different classes of the community—some loaded with immoderate wealth, while the great mass—the myriads

—were sunk in the deepest destitution. He was happy to find that in that meeting the obligations of religion had been so distinctly acknowledged; and on looking to the institutions of the Great Ruler of the world—on looking at the arrangements prescribed by Infinite Wisdom for the government of that nation, which, in former ages, it pleased God specially to distinguish with his favour, he observed that provisions were made to prevent the excessive accumulation of property, and, again, for preventing the test of destitution. He would just refer to that remarkable arrangement by which, at the commencement of every fiftieth, the year of jubilee, he who had been compelled by the pressure of circumstances to sell his inheritance, was again put in possession. This law at once prevented a great accumulation at least of landed property, and provided relief for the destitution of the distressed. And agrarian laws they knew were continually aimed at by the people of Rome. He spoke not now in praise of such an arrangement—the thing was impossible. Property must, of necessity, be dispensed in very different allotments; still, they could not but regret, not the comfort and happiness of the rich, but the degradation and misery of the poor. He had listened with the deepest interest to the speeches of their friends from England who had addressed them, and of the very affecting speech delivered by Mr Oastler; no portions were more refreshing than those which cast some little light on his personal character and history. He, like others, he supposed, had been led on some occasions to suspect that Mr Oastler was an agitator, and, perhaps, something worse; but he was delighted to find him a witness for the truth, and almost a martyr for it. It gave him the greatest pleasure, if he might judge from the whole tenor of his communication, to welcome him among them, not only as a man of humanity, but a Christian—one who recognized the obligations of religion, the authority of the Saviour; and who appeared

to be actuated by that spirit of love which was, indeed, the great distinction of the gospel. He could not but express a hope, that as the abolition of West Indian negro slavery was, as he believed, to be attributed pre-eminently to the influence of Christian principle, so the abolition of home slavery, of factory slavery, would be won by the operation of the same great principle. The feelings of humanity were the work of God and the gift of God, and ought to be cherished by us ; still they all knew there were higher principles summoned forth by the Gospel by the word of God. He was persuaded that the victory they aimed at would be won, not merely by feelings of humanity, but by the principles, the operative principles, of Christianity."

There was complete agreement between the ministers of the Gospel in Scotland and those of England. The speeches, at the various meetings in Scotland, were very fully reported in the columns of the *Times*, and in the columns of the local newspapers in the cities and towns in which they were spoken. While these public proceedings, through the agency of the press, were commanding universal attention, the signing of petitions, praying parliament to enact the Ten Hours' Bill, was rapidly in progress, committee and delegate meetings in all manufacturing districts were frequently held and numerously attended; for the time being, the whole attention of the workers in factories, and that of the majority of others, who were interested in public questions, was concentrated on the one subject of factory regulation.

The proceedings in parliament were looked forward to with anxiety. The opponents of the measure, and its more timid supporters, were heard to talk of a compromise in the form of an Eleven Hours' Bill. Mr Oastler everywhere proclaimed "no compromise;" Mr Fielden, and all the leading promoters, eschewed all concession; every one was certain that "no proposition in favour of any measure beyond ten

hours a day would be listened to." On January the 26th, 1847, Mr Fielden moved the first reading of the Ten Hours' Bill, which was read a first time without opposition; in the ministry, it was an open question, and many members of the House closely watched the progress of events. The subject had been so thoroughly discussed that it did not admit of any novel feature; it was now a question depending upon petitions and votes. All the more active among the leaders of the Ten Hours' Bill movement were in London, canvassing members of both houses of parliament, and using every practicable effort to insure success. There seemed to be no limit to petitions in support of the measure; those against were comparatively few. The bill was read a second time on February 10th; Mr Hume led the opposition, and was supported by the usual opponents of factory regulation, prominently, by Mr Bright, Dr Bowring, and Mr Mark Phillips. The debate was adjourned, and again resumed on February 17th, on which occasion the principal speakers against the bill were Mr Roebuck and Sir A. L. Hay. The speakers in support of the bill, during these debates, were Mr Fielden, Mr Ferrand, Lord John Manners, Mr Newdegate, Mr G. Banks, the Hon. Mr Howard, Mr Muntz, Mr Bernal, Mr Sharman Crawford, Sir Robert Inglis, Sir George Strickland, and Mr T. S. Duncombe. The second Sir Robert Peel, in a motion for adjournment, made by Mr Escott, stated that he (Sir Robert) was opposed to the passing of the bill; and referring to a complaint that he and others had not spoken, observed :—"After the time that had been wasted, and when their opinions were perfectly well known—when the subject had been completely exhausted —and when no new arguments had been introduced, he really thought that they had better consulted the public convenience, and deferred to public opinion, by remaining silent on the occasion."

A division was taken, and the numbers were—for

the second reading, 195; against the second reading, 87: majority for the second reading, 108.

In the House of Commons the result was received with "loud cheers;" the news was rapidly communicated throughout the manufacturing districts; the excitement and satisfaction of the operatives were great; many committee meetings were held, resolutions and memorials passed, thanking Lord John Russell for past support, and praying him to be faithful to the cause of the factory workers, and to aid their friends in parliament on the third reading of the bill. Resolutions expressing gratitude were also passed, embodying the names of those members of parliament who had distinguished themselves by their support of the Ten Hours' Bill; the efforts on behalf of the measure were not relaxed, while the enthusiasm of the operatives was increased.

On March the 17th the subject was again under discussion in the House of Commons, and on a division, which tested the supporters and opponents of the measure, the numbers were, 144 against 66; being a majority of 78 in support of the bill. The number of firms, of factory masters, which forwarded petitions in support of ten hours' labour per day in factories, in 1847, was 922—they represented much wealth and influence. The opposition was influential, but inadequate any longer to prevent the enactment of the Ten Hours' Bill; it received the assent of the House of Commons. All the efforts made to divide its supporters on eleven hours were thus proved to have signally failed.

In the House of Lords the bill under the charge of the Earl of Ellesmere and Lord Feversham made rapid progress. In the debate on the second reading the economical, religious, and moral bearings of the question were considered. The speeches of the Earl of Ellesmere and of Lord Feversham contained a recapitulation of the principal facts and arguments of the case, and a summary of those urged in opposition. The speech of the Earl of Ellesmere was a masterly piece

of reasoning, and all but exhausted the subject. Considered in connection with political economy and the duties of government. His lordship said:—

"My Lords,—The measures now proposed for your acceptance have originated in far different quarters than in the mind of one so little entitled to your lordships' attention as myself. They have originated in the crowded receptacles of human labour; they have been elaborated in the factory and the alley, amid the whirl of machinery, and in those long rows of lodging-houses which grow up around the giant chimneys of Lancashire and Yorkshire. This bill has its root in the stern experience of the husband and the father. From this humble, but, I am sure, in your lordships' view, not contemptible seed, the idea has mounted upwards in the shape of such petitions as those which have encumbered your lordships' table. Men of higher education —men whose lives are one professional and practical exercise of philanthropy, have assisted the progress of the measure to the ears of the legislature by their sanction and their advocacy; medical men in every branch of practice, clergymen of every religious persuasion. Springing from such a source, founded on such a basis of feeling and opinion, it has made its way through much difficulty against powerful opposition, till it has obtained the sanction of an influential portion of the cabinet, of a conclusive majority in the House of Commons, and, so supported and recommended, has reached the table of your lordships' house. I state these things, my lords, not for the purpose of inducing any one of your lordships to abdicate your privilege of free discussion or of deliberate judgment. Latest and least of the accessions to your lordships' house, I should be sorry to signalize my first endeavour at addressing your lordships by proposing any surrender of your independence, any infraction of your privileges. Considering, however, the nature of the question at issue — considering that in the

majorities which have sanctioned this measure elsewhere—considering that every debatable point has been argued elsewhere by men who have stood on their own weary feet at the mule, and pieced the thread with their own hands, and who, by the strong exercise of that strong intelligence which appears to me an indigenous plant of the manufacturing districts of England, by their perseverance in honest industry, have raised themselves to the House of Commons ;—I ask you this at least ;—I ask you to receive this bill with something of that *prima facie* deference with which, some months ago, I, as a member of the House of Commons, should have received some measure of equity law perchance, which had come down to that house, having passed through the ordeal of those legal minds which adorn and instruct, and, in such measures, greatly govern your lordships' deliberations. My lords, the principle of this bill has been impugned, as involving legislative interterference with the rights of capital and labour. I might slur over this objection on the ground of repeated precedent. In the House of Commons I would do so ; but addressing your lordships, who have been less engaged with the subject, I think it more respectful, briefly to attempt my own vindication on this head. I am not one of those who presume, out of their own ignorance or idleness, to cast reflections on the acute and laborious men who have devoted themselves to the science of political economy, nor am I a sceptic as to the general validity of the main tenets of that school, nor an impugner of the truth which it professes to have demonstrated. I am prepared, however, if necessary, to contend that I am advocating nothing inconsistent with the doctrines of political economy. I do not wish to enter at length on such debatable ground, but I would much rather refer your lordships to an argument which you would find in the debates, delivered by a noble earl, now on the Ministerial bench, who drew the just distinction

between restrictions on labour and capital devised to increase wealth, and those intended for other purposes—to guard against want and physical evils. My lords, I dislike a meddling government. I believe with him, that for the creation of the greatest producible wealth in any given community, and, therefore, for the widest diffusion of that material wellbeing which attends the production of wealth, the policy of abstinence from legislative meddling is the surest policy, and, therefore, I think it incumbent on any one who departs from that policy, to assign distinct grounds for his justification. The master manufacturer and the operative have both a right, I admit it, to say to me—you are interfering with my free action, you are selecting mine from a crowd of other occupations, to make it the subject of experimental legislation. I claim an explanation, I demand an exceptional reason for your conduct. My lords, I find that justification, as most of your lordships will anticipate, in the inherent, inalienable tendencies of that agent which Watt forced into the service of man, as applied to the four great branches of our textile industry, which come under the provisions of this bill; I mean the tendency, in the first instance, to attract to its ministration the labour of those whom in respect to age or sex, or both, nature never intended for hard and continuous labour, and next, in its tendency to make that labour continuous and unceasing, and protracted to a limit of physical and mental endurance which, in my opinion, no Christian legislature can see its subjects approach without acknowledging the duty of interfering, if it can interfere, for their relief and protection. It is on this ground, my lords, that finding, as I do, with regard to these branches of industry, the means and opportunity of interference, I claim the right to exercise them. I say, my lords, finding the means and opportunity, for this also is an essential element of practical interference, and is my reply to an argument which,

though often used, is I think singularly inconclusive—to a course of reasoning very commonly adopted towards any man who is hunting down a particular grievance, and which endeavours to divert his attention by pointing out fifty other objects in pursuit. My lords, there is doubtless enough of abuse and misery and oppression in the world, to make a sentimental or flighty philanthropist fold his arms in despair. My lords, I invite your lordships to interfere with these large collective aggregations of labour, because theory and experience tell me, you can do so with effect—because they are open to inspection and capable of control—because you can do much to prevent abuse, and, if the hard necessity arise, to punish it. I am aware that this very feature of the case has been alleged as a reason for non-interference; it has been said, that the factory system is the very department of our industry in which abuse and oppression are most discoverable and can least escape detection. We have been repeatedly told, that we take an unphilosophical view of the effects of the use of machinery; that it is the great diminisher of the sum of mental and physical labour, the fertile source of leisure and contentment, and that we should be cautious how we meddle with its operations. I admit these facts; but I demand your lordships' attention to some further facts connected with the employment of that fixed and expansive capital, into the scope and effect of which it becomes a duty from which, as a legislator, I cannot shrink from inquiring. There is, in my opinion, no grander result of human intelligence than a large cotton mill; but I say this of it, that from the moment its engine is started, raised by the capital and governed by the will of the acute and enterprising individual who sits in its office, it becomes the direct interest of that presiding genius, that its motions should be as unceasing and continuous as human contrivance can make them, that there is no part of that vast system of wheels and levers which can rest without

loss, or in the ordinary and average course of commercial prosperity, pursue its motions without gain. The human labour attached hand and foot to that system, for the most part, admits not of relays. What is the natural, the inevitable consequence of this? Why, that which has resulted—that with which, step by step, gradually, cautiously, effectually and successfully, you have been endeavouring for thirty years to moderate and curtail, in wise defiance of the stated principles of political economy. That the strong impulse of gain is placed in direct and dangerous antagonism with the claims of humanity—that it almost invariably prevails in the struggle, as for a time it was left, and if left to itself, unchecked and uncontrolled, it reduces a part of your population to the condition of slavery, unmitigated by that interest in the physical well-being of the party which does operate on the slave-owner of Carolina. My lords, such things have been; to prevent them you have repeatedly interfered, and your exertions have not been in vain. Now, my lords, does the same reason hold good with other departments of human industry in which machinery of human contrivance is less complicated? I say machinery of human contrivance, for I hold that, in some sense, the earth itself is a machine—that the clod of the valley in which you drop the germ of future vegetation, is as much a machine as that in which you deposit your portions of raw cotton. In another place, my lords, I took the liberty of telling the lords of the soil, that in this point of view I considered them as monster manufacturers, and I re-assert that opinion here. Your lordships, in the management of hereditary estates, which have descended to you from the Conquest, are connected with machinery as well as Mr Gregg; but, my lords, there is a difference between the machinery of God's contrivance and that of his creatures. Now, I will pass to the practical consideration of the degree to which we shall extend our interference in this matter.

My lords, after long discussion, after repeated consideration, the House of Commons has decided, so far as that branch of the legislature can decide, that the labour of women and young persons under eighteen years of age, shall be limited to ten hours of work, exclusive of the two which are necessary for refreshment. I am bound to state, though no one of your lordships can be ignorant of the fact, that from the necessary intermixture of the hands of different ages and sexes, in the operations of the manufacture, this promise will include, in its direct operation, those whom it does not directly affect. Adult man is not affected directly by it, but I can by no means avail myself of that circumstance, in argument, as to the evil effect of the measure; well knowing this, the adult population of the manufacturing districts, so far from shrinking from the consequence, is to an enormous extent interested in its acceptance by your lordships. I believe that an overwhelming majority of it is at this moment trembling with expectation, perhaps, with just apprehension, that the cause they support may suffer prejudice from my own incapacity as an advocate. I do not state this as an argument to your lordships, I admit it, as a subordinate consideration to myself. I think it an unquestionable collateral advantage that its acceptance will realize hopes which have been entertained and fostered since the attempt of the first Sir Robert Peel, in 1815, whose measure, which was on the verge of completion, was nearly a fac-simile of the present. I think it a vast advantage that it will put a close to a peaceful and orderly, but an intense and peculiar agitation, but I do not state this as a reason for influencing your lordships' better judgments. I think a bill supported by such Ministers in the House of Commons entitled to much respect; but I am not here to register the decisions of that house, or, to induce your lordships to do so. I accept this measure because we find, after some hesitation—after listening much, and thinking

much, and speaking a little, I think it a beneficial bargain, by which the parties to be affected will obtain certain advantages of incalculable importance to them, at a risk of certain sacrifices, which it is not possible precisely to calculate, but, which will leave at the least the balance of advantage largely in favour of those who have to make them. Two main objections have been taken to the measures, two principal and inevitable consequences have been held out as certain to ensue. It is said that, by striking off a twelfth from the time during which, when employment is rife, you are at present able to labour, you will either diminish wages or cause defeat from foreign competition. I am not bound, throughout, to argue with those who predict both these consequences, because I think the one consequence lost in connexion with the other. For the first of these consequences I have always advised those with whom I had been in communication, to be prepared, and I have certainly always received the advice that, to the best of their ability, they had counted the cost and were prepared, on behalf of themselves and their families, to encounter it. I am not fond of prophecying in matters of this description, if, on the one hand I am not prepared to risk my reputation for accuracy in a calculation of the exact effect upon wages ; on the other, I ask any man to favour me with a calculation of the amount of actual domestic economy which may be effected by the mother of three children who returns to her home two hours sooner than at present. I cannot calculate this, because I cannot see —I cannot hear—I cannot wish—I cannot ask—still less can I calculate the evanescent quantities, the social effects of leisure and repose to the mind, or lay down in advance statistical results on bodily health or longevity. I have no doubt whatever that the average sum total of these elements, if they could be calculated, would show a set-off to any probable diminution of money wages, which will, one day,

be satisfactory to those who have co-operated in passing this measure. On this subject I must also call your lordships' attention to another circumstance—the deductions are made, when the article is brought in by the operative, for 'waste' and 'spoil.' My lords, from such information as I can obtain, it is my firm belief that nine-tenths of that spoiled will arise in the task-weary hours of the operative's present average toil. I have never met with any man of any class, conversant with the subject, who has not laid much stress on this circumstance. I pass, my lords, to the question of foreign competition. I do not profess to receive with indifference, from men for whose station, acquirements, and abilities, I have profound respect, their ideas on this subject, but, I am consoled by the reflection, that no step has been taken in this matter which has not been preceded by similar warnings of ruin, and similar threats of emigration by them, which I doubt not have assailed many of your lordships as they have assailed me. And yet, my lords, I hold in my hands a paper which shows that England has yet held her own against the competition of the world, and which leads me to think that if she is allowed to suffer decay, it will originate rather in a diminished supply of the raw material than in any legislation which, for the sake of the highest interests of humanity, we may have consented to adopt. My lords, I must say that the language of some of these parties has varied very much with circumstances, in a very short space of time. I am addressing many now who retain, through evil report and good, the opinions which they have uniformly expressed in favour of restrictions on the free importation of corn, but I doubt whether the sternest adherent to that system would not admit that, whilst those restrictions existed, the case of the worsted manufacturer, as an opponent to this bill, did not present a difficulty in the way of limiting the hours of labour. My lords, I speak for myself at least,

and say, I had no occasion to broach what was then urged by the millowner. From what I have lately heard, I can hardly believe that the old corn law and the duty on raw cotton are not still on the statute book. I look for them there in vain, but I also listen in vain for a repetition of language which was used at the period when a struggle was going on for their removal. Then the grievance and the evil of long hours were admitted, then the factory delegates were told,—'It is true that overwork is decreasing your stature, but do not agitate for the immediate alteration of those laws. Join us in agitating to remove the real obstacle to that measure, and that removed, you shall gain your object, at least with his employer's consent, if not with that active co-operation which might be too much to expect. My lords, such was the nature of the language, and I have proofs of it, used by some gentlemen, who, doubtless, in the heat of the moment, in the ardour of pursuit of a great political object, thought, and intended what they said, but who were deceived, that free trade and relief from duty is no guarantee against the danger, and is not to be spoken of as a palliation of the effects of foreign competition. My lords, I believe that from a concourse of circumstances, peculiar to the character of this nation, England is in a condition to set an example to the world in this matter, as she has done in others; and that she is able to do right and fear not; and more than this, that her example will be followed, and that foreign statesmen, who may not be disposed to follow it, will be pressed by that influence of public feeling and opinion which is acting upon ourselves.

My lords, these and such as these are considerations which divest me of any serious apprehension for the result of the measure I propose; which inspire in my mind a stern hope that its advantages will not be purchased at the price which some predict. It is said sometimes that, after all,

these advantages will be small—that we overrate the opportunities which a reduction of ten hours will afford to the artisan, and it would almost appear as if some supposed, that his time may be as profitably employed, in an honest and respectable occupation, as it will be when at his own command. There may, there probably will, be cases in which these hours may be mis-spent; the factory may be exchanged for the gin-shop. I am not of opinion that the hours so torn from the mill and the loom will be sufficient to raise materially the standard of education or mental culture. I am not caring to enquire where or how the man, woman, or child who has worked hard for ten hours, employs the remainder. I do not think, on the average, that the population of Manchester is the least disqualified for exercising its own judgment and following its own tastes in this particular, or in the least requires any meddling supervision of mine. My lords, in the course I have taken, in accepting the conduct of this bill, I have undertaken a given responsibility for its eventual consequences. Should it prosper to the extent of my hopes and expectations, and should I live to see that result, I reserve to myself, as my sole but all-sufficient reward, the gratification of that spectacle. Popularity I have not sought, and utterly disdain. If that reward should eventually fall due, it is impossible that the intelligence and justice of the people should not place the saddle on the right horse. It will be due to my noble friend [Lord Ashley]—it will be due to the master manufacturer, who has not allowed himself to be swayed by circumstances which would insure his own interests, in securing, as I believe, completed contracts with others. It will be due to those who have worked through the long hours of this bill in the workshop of the legislature, and not to the labourer of the eleventh hour, who now begs your lordships' pardon for so long trespassing on your

lordships' attention." The noble earl concluded by moving the second reading of the bill.

Lord Feversham spoke with special reference to the progress and history of the factory movement. A subject on which his lordship was a high authority. He had known the factory movement from the first letter written, on *White Slavery*, by Mr Oastler, in the *Leeds Mercury*. His lordship had, at all times, been ready of access to the factory delegates ; he had communed with them freely, contributed generously towards their funds, and watched the progress of their movement with the closest possible attention ; the experience of years had deepened his conviction of the importance of the measure ; he had advocated it in the Castle Yard of York, side by side with Sadler, Oastler, and Bull. The audience and the circumstances in the Castle Yard of York, in 1832, and in the House of Lords, in 1847, were widely different ; then, the struggle was but begun, now, it was drawing towards a close; then, the voice of prophecy was loud against the measure, now, reason and experience were on its side—the voice of Lord Feversham was unchanged. Addressing the peers of England, he said:—"That this measure was one of great importance in reference to the moral and social welfare of the operative classes employed in factories of the United Kingdom, as well as to the national honour and character, no one who had paid the least attention to the subject would for one moment doubt. It was now some years since parliament had been addressed in favour of a Ten Hours' Bill, and the manner in which those who sought the boon had conducted themselves, was well worthy of their lordships' consideration. They had never had recourse to violence, to unscrupulous agitation, to combinations against employers, although suggestions were not wanting to prompt them to such a course. Never, in one single instance, so far as he was aware, had they committed a

breach of the peace at any of the great meetings in the manufacturing districts, although thousands, and tens of thousands, were congregated in furtherance of their common object. On the contrary, their assemblages had been distinguished by unequivocal manifestations of loyalty to the institutions of the country. The advocates of the bill were the industrious and well-disposed; its opponents, the idle and evil-disposed, who cared not how their families toiled, whilst they themselves spent their time at a public-house. The question of wages was undoubtedly one of the greatest importance, and this point had been invariably discussed in the meetings which had been held in the manufacturing districts. The operatives were invariably asked, 'Are you prepared to submit to a reduction of wages, in case such should be the effect of the passing of the Ten Hours' Bill.' And the answer to that question had always been in the affirmative. For his own part, he was convinced that the effect of the bill, would be to cause more regular employment, without the fluctuations experienced under the existing system. The average of mills do not work ten hours a day; and he did not think that, on an average of five or seven years, there would, in fact, be any diminution in the rate of wages. Whenever the subject had been brought forward in parliament, it had always been met by the same anticipations of evil, and, yet, he had not seen one single instance in which these predictions had been verified. Was it likely, if such were the probable result, that so large a number of master manufacturers would be found amongst its supporters? Who was the individual that had introduced it, in the other house of parliament? The hon. member for Oldham, Mr Fielden, a gentleman who had been engaged during his whole life-time—and that not a short one—in manufacture, and is now bringing up his sons to the same occupation. Was it reasonable, or likely, that such men

as Mr Fielden, for he was representative of others, would support a measure which in practice would inflict injury on themselves and their children." [The noble lord related the history of the various legislative measures connected with factory labour.]

His lordship continued: — "It appeared from the evidence taken before Mr Sadler's committee, that the highest authorities in such matters, anticipated the most beneficial results from the limitation of the hours of labour in factories. The measures heretofore passed, for limiting those hours of labour, had proved in no way injurious to our manufacturing industry. He found that between the years 1819 and 1845 the consumption of cotton in this country had increased 400 per cent. Many clergymen and other persons in different parts of the country, well acquainted with the wants and interests of the working classess, had expressed their belief that the present arrangements for the employment of operatives in factories had the unhappy effect of leaving them no time for attending to religion and education; under these circumstances, he hoped that their lordships would not refuse to give their assent to the second reading of the bill then under their consideration. He hoped, that the members of her Majesty's government in that house would be unanimous in favour of the measure. The noble lord at the head of the government [Lord John Russell] had, in the other house, fully redeemed the pledge which he had given to the electors of the City of London last autumn, when he had told them that Her Majesty's government would be prepared to take into their consideration the important subject of the moral and social condition of the great masses of the people, with a view to the improvement of their condition, and the elevation of the character of those masses. The bill before their lordships was but a part, although by no means an unimportant part, of the measures bearing upon that great question. The noble lord at the

head of the government had honourably redeemed the pledge he had given; for, although he would have preferred an eleven hours' clause to a ten hours' clause, he had given his vote in the House of Commons in favour of the third reading of the bill as it then stood. He trusted that the noble earl at the head of the Board of Trade [the Earl of Clarendon] would pursue a similar course, and he earnestly hoped that their lordships, generally, would extend, on that occasion, to the operative classes the benefits of their legislation. They had, of late, passed several measures calculated to promote the interests of master-manufacturers; they had, last year, repealed the duty on foreign corn; and they had, in a preceding year, removed the duties on foreign cotton and wool. A promise had been given to the working classes that, after the corn laws were repealed, they should have a Ten Hours' Bill, or, at all events, there had been a general understanding to that effect in the manufacturing districts. It might, however, be said that the principles of political economy were opposed to that measure. Now, he could not enter into that question, but he should observe, that they had, at least, on the other side, the principles of justice, of humanity, of religion, and of Christianity. He trusted their lordships would give their cordial, their zealous, and, he would add, their unanimous support to the bill; and sure he was, that even those who had been its most determined opponents would, after having witnessed the beneficial effects of its operation, admit that it was a measure which had conferred incalculable benefits on the working classes of this country, and which had ensured the triumph of justice, benevolence, and patriotism over injustice, inhumanity, and oppression."

The Bishop of London observed:—"That he thought that a great part of the question concerned that very numerous and unprotected class—the children who were employed in factories, and it was with reference to them, particularly, that

he wished to ask for their lordships' attention to the observations he had to offer. The factory workmen, acting under the consideration of that necessity which was produced by the peculiar state of the labour market in the manufacturing districts, seemed to regard their children as mere instruments for making money; and, here again, he thought the parental functions of the state came into play, and ought to interpose to relieve those children from that necessity. If the cupidity of their employers, or the ignorance of their parents, compelled them to extend their labour far beyond those limits of exertion which their bodily constitution was suited for, and, therefore, he might say, beyond that point which their benevolent Creator designed for them, he thought it became the sacred duty of the legislature to interfere and afford them that protection which their natural guardians were not inclined, or in a condition, to give them. If they desired that the evil should not be perpetuated or aggravated, and that some chance should be given to the rising generation of growing up in habits of religion and morality, their lordships must interpose to save them from their ceaseless round of exhausting toil, and leave them more time for improvement. Their intellectual faculties were contracted by the monotonous and wearisome labour to which they were subjected, and that formed no unimportant consideration in the question then before their lordships. The agricultural labourer, notwithstanding the eloquent description of his noble and learned friend of the effect which the toil of that labourer produced on his health and spirits, was in a much more favourable condition for carrying out the great object of his being than the factory workman. His work was carried on in the open field, where he was inhaling pure air, and saw the pure light of heaven, and, at any moment, he might suspend his toil to prevent exhaustion to his strength and spirits. It was not so with the factory workman. His loom must move on with unceas-

ing motion for the appointed number of hours, to complete the proper quantity of work, and it admitted of no suppression in the labour of those children, who were deputed to carry on and watch its ceaseless process. But that imprisonment, as it were, of a large class of our fellow creatures, was not a case in which the legislature ought to interfere, unless the evils which were shown to be wrought in an opposite direction could be shown to be greater than those which would be produced by their interference. The evils, however, of the present system were so great, that they could hardly be contemplated by any humane man without shuddering. The debility of frame, the shattered strength, the exhausted spirit, the early death, were various and lamentable evils; but they were not the worst. Before, however, he proceeded to the consideration of the latter point, he would advert to the mortality of the manufacturing districts. It might be argued that the diminished average of human life in those districts was to be ascribed to the unhealthy condition of large towns; but that was completely refuted by certain facts which had been ascertained. It appeared from a statement which had been made by a most able and benevolent individual, Mr Fletcher, a medical man, who had made a close investigation of this subject, that the average duration of life of the factory operative was something less than one-half that of other operatives in the same districts. He would now advert, to what he considered the worst consequences of the present system—namely, that it entirely disqualified the children from receiving the benefits of education after a certain age, when, perhaps, it is not going too far to say education was more important to them than before. He would admit, that up to the age of thirteen years, those children were comparatively well provided for, as the hours of labour, up to that age, were limited to six hours; but the moment they attained that age their work was doubled, and they very soon lost all they had learned before, because, after

twelve hours of exhausting labour, they had no spirit or strength left to attend school or to profit by it. Their lordships must also consider, that in addition to those twelve hours for which they are obliged to work in the factory, two more were reckoned in going to and from the mills, and in the necessary cleansing and refreshment; so that, even if this bill passed, and the hours of labour were restricted to ten hours, there would be still twelve hours of the day no portion of which could be devoted to school for the purpose of deriving sound and wholesome instruction. Under these circumstances, it was no wonder that the clergy and medical men of the manufacturing districts were all but unanimous in favour of this bill, which, they believed, would at least diminish, if not altogether cure, the evils that existed. But the bill was also supported by a large portion of those whose interests would be most deeply affected by it, not merely by factory workmen, but, by many of the great millowners, who, according to the opinions of the opponents of the measure, would be great losers by it. It was said they would lose one-sixth of the factory labour of the country, and to that extent our manufacturers would be destroyed. But, on the other side, he placed the great gain the measure would produce to morality and humanity."

The Bishop of Oxford:—"Begged to remind their lordships of the bill passed two years ago to prevent women working in mines. Every argument, employed at the present time against this measure, had been used then. They were told, it was impossible to legislate safely upon subjects which involved labour and wages; that the result of interference would be that the mines would be ruined, and miners driven abroad. The legislature did, however, pass that measure, and what had been the consequence? The miners had become better workmen, and the women good mothers. The principle had, in fact, been given up, or rather, this was no exception to the general rule. This

was an attempt to fix the rate of wages; this was a different subject-matter; it was wrong to create wealth by sacrificing the souls and bodies of men. The law interfered to prevent the creation of wealth by working on the seventh day. Why not work on the seventh day? It was considered no infraction of the principles of political economy to rest on the seventh day. The only question for the legislature in such cases was, when and how it should interfere, and here moral and religious considerations exacted interference at its hands. The legislature did not suffer a man to build a house where he liked, if it should be a nuisance to others, or was unsafe; and, although in such a case it interfered with natural liberty, it did so in order to protect others from injury; and so here, they were called upon to protect those who could not protect themselves—against what? Why against being forced, contrary to their desire, so to work that their bodies and souls were liable to be sacrificed by labour. And what would they be reduced to if this measure was refused? He did not say that their lordships would drive those people to take the law into their own hands, though it would be well if this matter were seriously considered by their lordships. Nothing was more dangerous than to refuse the petitions of a great body of the people, to leave their desires unsatisfied, to put them off with cold rejection, or even with needless delay. Let their lordships consider the position of these people. The capitalists and great manufacturers could make their own terms; the working classes had only the option of working at the wages offered, or not working at all. The capitalists could exert a complete power over the working classes. How could these men resist?—only by combination. Were their lordships prepared to make them see that the only way to resist was by combination against their masters? He (the Bishop of Oxford) had asked the factory delegates about this matter, and their answer was that there were

combinations, and that it was their (the delegates') great endeavour to prevent such combinations. But, if this measure was rejected, it would be difficult to prevent illegal combinations, to which the men would consider they were driven, in order to obtain their just rights. Depend upon it, there would be attempts made to force from a reluctant legislature, what they considered to be their due, and therefore he warned their lordships to weigh well what they were doing, before they rejected a measure which so deeply affected the interests of all classes in this country. What gave the manufacturers their present superiority? It was the security of all property in England; but if they were bringing up in the manufacturing districts a population altogether strange to legislative matters, in the belief that legislation was unconnected with moral considerations, they would go on unsettling the very basis of the security of property. Nothing was so likely to deprive the manufacturers of this security as to expose it to the risk of conflict with the physical strength of the people. The acquisition of wealth was based upon moral principles. There could be no political wrong, which was politically expedient, or that could tend to the production of wealth. Depend upon it, that if they neglected the people, in order to make the nation rich, they would in the end make the nation poor, by debasing the people."

Successful opposition was impossible, but Lord Brougham, on what he believed to be sound economical grounds, felt bound to argue and vote against the bill. The Bishops, as the guardians of the interests of the church, gave to the Ten Hours' Bill their unanimous and influential support; those of London and Oxford replied to the objections of opponents, and pressed the claims of the measure earnestly on the attention of their lordships. For the second reading, the Contents were 53; the Non-contents, 11: majority, 42.

A protest against the third reading was entered on record, signed "Monteagle, Brandon, Ashburton, Radnor, Foley, Wrottesly;" this document was a recapitulation, in a condensed form, of the principal objections which had been urged against a limitation of the hours of factory labour by law, from the opening of the controversy. It must be some satisfaction to the noble lords, whose names it bears, that the serious and evil results they predicated have not been realized.

In the House of Lords, the details of the bill did not undergo any change, it passed through its last stage on June the 1st, and received the royal assent on June the 8th, 1847. A few bold and persevering men, after a struggle of many years, were successful in their efforts to protect the weak; they, on behalf of the interests of humanity, had stamped the impress of their minds on the statute-book of their country, and by their efforts they had directly and practically benefited many of their fellow beings, and proved that, under certain circumstances, the state may beneficially interfere to protect the health and morals of the people.

The words of the Speaker of the House of Commons, when addressing the Queen and the House of Lords, on July the 23rd, 1847, deserve preservation: "We have found it necessary to place a further limitation on the hours of labour of young persons employed in factories; and by giving more time and opportunity for their religious and moral instruction, for healthful recreation, and the exercise of their domestic duties, we have elevated the character and conditions of a large and industrious class engaged in manufacturing operations."

Among those who have been least conspicuous but most helpful in the accomplishment of this great and good work, must be ranked the names of "Wood and Walker," the

eminent worsted spinners of Bradford, in Yorkshire; their aid has been continuous, their labours incessant, and of the kinds most required. In public efforts for social and political ends, it may be truly said, "money is power, and good example a wholesome external influence," and of both, have this firm been liberal; their character and services demand a fuller notice than they have hitherto received, apart from their claims to attention, in a work devoted to a narrative of events in which they were influential agents: facts in the lives of men of industry, are, at all times, instructive, and form the kernel of the history of the age.

In the year 1812, Mr John Wood, of Bradford, having obtained a knowledge of the worsted business with one of the millowners of that town, which, at that time did not contain more than half a dozen of the same class, induced his father to erect for him a small mill, with steam engine of 20 horse-power, and began his career as a worsted spinner. He very soon effected great improvements in the machinery then employed, which enabled him to introduce new and superior yarns, and thus to acquire an important position. The profits of the trade were so large, that very few years passed over before he began to make an extension of his operations by the erection of additional buildings.

As a man of education and Christian principle, Mr Wood was not long in perceiving that the hours of labour, in the mills, were incompatible with the health and well-being of the children and young persons whose fingers were absolutely requisite in piecing or uniting the threads broken in the spinning, and who performed the other light work of the mill; he began at an early period, to grant ameliorations, and to adopt a course of liberality towards his workpeople, so that by the time he had been in business ten or twelve years, he had carried out an improved system. The great profits which were realized, led the millowners

generally to exact an excessive length of toil, and contributed to cause the gross abuses, which, for many years, were practised in that department of labour.

The extension of the factory system, brought on a more glaring amount of suffering and injury to the children and young persons working therein, and, about the year 1830, the evil became so great, that Mr Wood felt impelled, by a sense of duty, to make efforts for their deliverance. No law then existed, in the woollen and worsted mills, to restrain millowners from enforcing lengthened hours of working, and some of them exacted from those juveniles of both sexes, fourteen, sixteen, and even eighteen hours of daily toil, the year round! Although Mr Wood never worked his mill so long as any of the hours, per day, above mentioned, he felt that even from twelve to thirteen hours a day were far too protracted for human endurance ; he determined to adopt a plan whereby ten hours working per day was the rule for the younger, and eleven hours for the elder branches of those employed at his works; he also then established a school on the premises with a master and mistress, the latter to instruct the girls in needle-work. When the parents did not furnish their children with materials for sewing, calico and other cloth were provided by Mr Wood, and the articles, made up by the children, were sold to the parents at the cost of the cloth. In these arrangements Mr Wood was greatly assisted by the Rev. George Stringer Bull, then incumbent of Bierley, near Bradford, whose zeal and success, in promoting the education and physical improvement of the poor, have been surpassed by none.

Mr Wood not only deemed it right to place his own work-people in an improved position; but also to engage in arduous efforts to obtain parliamentary powers for enforcing proper hours and other regulations upon the whole factory system of the United Kingdom. He opened his mind and heart—as has been previously related—to his friend Mr Richard

Oastler. The result of Mr Wood's conference with Mr Oastler was, that the latter, at once entered upon the work, with a stern resolve to succeed, and, although in the course of the ensuing eventful agitation, of seventeen years duration, which terminated in the passing of the Ten Hours' Bill, very strong expressions were occasionally used, there was in no instance any breach of the peace, nor was there in Mr Oastler's conduct any features so prominent as those of disinterestedness and patriotism.

From 1832 to 1847, during which period the establishment of Mr Wood had been changed to the firm of Wood and Walker, and afterwards Walkers and Co., no more than eleven hours a day were worked, and the reason why ten hours was not the restriction, arose from the fact that the sacrifice annually made by working eleven hours, instead of those longer hours practised by their competitors, was as large as could be prudently made.

Mr Wood's anxiety for the physical and mental improvement of those in his employment was very great. We have heard Mr Oastler narrate, how he and Mr Wood have stood on the steps of the counting-house, facing the mill-yard, and watched the hungry children rush in to their previously prepared and well-arranged dining-room (a luxury known then to few factory children). They had watched the children's return, after dinner, in groups of twos, threes, fours, and fives, in animated conversation. Some running and romping, others shouting and singing, until suddenly, in joyous expectation of the "better time a coming," they would unite in their chorus:—

> "We will have the Ten Hours' Bill,
> That we will, that we will."

There was, then, in Mr Wood's face an expression of satisfaction and enjoyment, which "stores of gold" could not have awarded. Mr Wood embarked in the Ten Hours' Bill movement under a strong sense of religious duty; over him,

neither commercial, personal, nor political influences, had any longer control. He knew that he was rich, but his enjoyment of wealth was tainted by the impression, that many had endured grievous wrongs during its acquisition, and he most heroically resolved that, come what might, all factory children should, for the future, be protected by the law; for the attainment of that end, he was prepared to make every sacrifice. Though a man of most retiring habits, when the factory children required his presence, he was in the busiest of the throng. Public speaking was to him abhorrent; when his voice could serve the cause, no matter how numerous the assembly, that voice was heard. Disputes in newspapers were obnoxious to his habits, but when a millowner's opinion was required, in defence of the interests of factory children, his pen was used in their service. Mr Wood cherished a lively attachment to his friends, Lord Ashley, Messrs Oastler and Sadler, and the Rev. G. S. Bull, who, on all important occasions, received his counsel and support. When the Ten Hours' Bill was before parliament, Mr Wood was in London, advising and instructing members of both houses on the merits of the question. It was his habit to attend, when asked, all the more important of the committee meetings in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Mr Wood was honoured by a circle of admiring friends; their friendship he highly appreciated, but, on behalf of the factory children, he risked their approval and intimacy. With a generous heart, and liberal hand, he opened widely his well-filled purse, and made its contents tributary in every place to the requirements of the factory movement. His house was open at all times to the active friends of the Ten Hours' Bill, who, on their journies in furtherance of that cause, required rest and refreshment.

He continued faithful to the question of factory regulation, until his originally contemplated object was realised. We have trustworthy authority for asserting, that, uniting the sacrifices consequent on the practice of working shorter hours

than other capitalists in the neighbourhood, to the actual money spent by him in the furtherance of the Ten Hours' Bill movement in connection with the firm of Wood and Walker, and Walkers and Co., the total would amount to 50,000*l.*

Having realised a large fortune, Mr Wood retired from business some years back, and is gratefully remembered by his friends and old neighbours of the town of Bradford. His wealth was honourably acquired, not by sordid accumulation, but by steady commercial efforts, during the progress of which he lived as became an English gentleman, and liberally benefited all around him. When in possession of riches sufficient to enable him to change from an active Yorkshire manufacturer to the position of a country squire (which change, sanctioned by usage, is the natural desire of many enterprising Englishmen) he built, in his native town, a substantial and handsome church, parsonage, and schools, the former of which he endowed with an annual stipend of 350*l.* He now resides on his own large estate, Thedden Grange, in Hampshire. Mr Wood, though often pressed by the burgesses of his native town—Bradford, to become its representative in parliament, uniformly refused ; this circumstance is in keeping with his character ; he has courted privacy, except when impelled to appear in public by a keen sense of duty—and has at all times preferred the unostentatious exercise of charity and benevolence to external, worldly distinction. The temperament of some men unfits them for active conflict in the senate, but the wants of society are so varied that all may be useful. Mr Wood has been eminently serviceable to mankind, and the appreciation of his talents and virtues by his fellow townsmen, cannot have failed to have been gratifying to him, as it certainly was creditable to them.

Mr William Walker, for many years the active head, and, after Mr Wood's retirement, the principal of the firm of Wood and Walker (now Walkers and Co.) has, from 1830, been an unswerving supporter of the Ten Hours' Bill movement, and

not any man has rendered thereto more efficient service. Mr Walker is an excellent illustration of the benefits arising from probity, activity, and order; he knows, thoroughly, the value of minutes, and, in consequence, is enabled, without injury to himself or others, to devote hours to the fulfilment of the social duties of his position, as one of the chiefs of an industrial community, and a magistrate of the West Riding. In the capacities of proprietor and manager of a manufacturing firm, he has been essentially "the right man in the right place," and few places can be more important. Any one who has a knowledge of what Yorkshire woollen and worsted factories were thirty years ago, and is desirous of seeing the many advantages arising from judicious arrangement in manufacturing industry, should visit the factories of Walkers and Co. Everything necessary for the health and comfort of the factory workers, so far as the nature of wool-spinning allows, is done, and this, too, consistently with the profit of the employer, and necessarily for the welfare of the employed; these facts present a striking contrast with the unregulated factories in the town of Bradford thirty years back, and the change reflects high credit upon their spirited and benevolent proprietors.

Good example is not without effect; there are among Mr Walker's neighbours those who emulate him in the care he manifests for the lives and limbs of those he employs: and their merits ought not to pass unappreciated. Mr Walker is a tory and churchman, he is also what is called "a no-popery man," contending that every gain acquired by the pope is a loss to the British crown and constitution. As a clear-headed man of business, and a practical improver of the condition of working men, a useful Englishman, and an upright magistrate, his reputation is deservedly high. He is possessed of superior talent, efficient rather than showy; like most men of enlarged commercial experience,

he is more apt to affirm conclusions, than to state the reasonings by which he arrives at them, but is very capable of doing both, when necessary. Though a warm and active politician, he is tolerant to those who conscientiously differ from him in opinion, always taking care to state boldly his own convictions.

A keen apprehension of responsibility is the primary requisite for the fulfilment of duty. Mr Walker, in the management of his factories, carries his sense of duty into the particular circumstances of the lives of others, showing that the factory system need not necessarily be a national reproach. Should a person of immoral character find employment at "Walkers and Co." Mr Walker endeavours, in the first place, to impress the individual with a conviction of the evil and danger to himself and others of the practice complained of; if amendment does not promptly follow, dismissal invariably takes place. It is the rule at "Walkers and Co.," and at some other firms, to pay the wages of those in their employment about the middle of the week; the object is to enable operatives to expend their weekly earnings with full time for deliberation. This is a matter of importance; the payment of wages on a Saturday, very frequently leads to the practice of hurried and unprofitable marketing, with the attendant evils of temptation to irregular habits, and trenching on the rest and quiet of the Sabbath-day. Mr Walker rigidly maintains that home is the proper sphere of duty for married women, and therefore objects to employ them. It is well understood by females, on being married, that they are expected to remain at home, which causes greater care in the choice of husbands. Mr Walker has often said—"The practice of husbands depending on the wages of their wives, is an inversion of family order, and ought to be put down by every means reasonably available for that end." A declaration to which all

right-minded men must subscribe. The payment of wages for work done, is not, in itself, a fulfilment of the obligation of an employer. A large amount of good would be the result to the country, if capitalists and employers of labour would admit and act upon the necessity of this sense of enlarged responsibility; and thereby show that the health, morals, education, and general thrift of those in their employment were, at least, as much deserving of attention as the state of the markets, or the payment of accounts. The congregation of workers might by such means be made a practical advantage to society.

Messrs Wood and Walker, in addition to personal services and sacrifices, have been the centre of a spirited and influential circle of friends, who have indirectly, but powerfully, helped onward the common cause. In no country in the world does social position exercise so much influence on public opinion, as in England. Some among our gentry can count back a long line of ancestry, who have been recognised as the resident leaders of society, in their own neighbourhood, and to whom land and honours have been hereditary. The direct and indirect influence of such men is, at all times, very great. In the West Riding, there were several such among the friends of Messrs Wood and Walker, and to whom they were united by ties of friendship, and by a concord in principle and practice on public questions. Colonel Tempest, of Tong Hall, has at all times been ready to support the factory movement. He is a landowner of ancient family, a magistrate in the counties of York and Lancaster; a gentleman of sterling intergrity, he never yields on a question of principle. He maintains that it is the duty of the church to christianize the state; that it is the primary business of the state to care for the church; that the poor have prior rights of maintenance to all others. He viewed with horror, the cruelties practised in some factories, and

affirmed that the church, state, and the law were disgraced by the very existence of the evils of the unregulated factory system. Were one asked to define the character of Colonel Tempest in a few words, the safe definition would be—"He is an English gentleman of George the Third's time." Colonel Tempest has only once spoken at a Ten Hours' Bill meeting, in the Castle yard of York; but his known support of that cause, and friendship for its public advocates, were of much importance, and he, unitedly with others of similar influence, constituted a powerful lever for the elevation of the oppressed. He is representative of others, not a few of whom, have been personally attached to Mr John Wood, or to Mr William Walker, or to both.

The joy of the factory operatives at the final success of their much and long-desired measure was great, and expressed in various ways; but invariably combining promise and exhortation for future improvement. The factory movement had been the means of training considerable numbers of working men to a high sense of responsibility and moral duty; they felt, that from them much was hoped, and they were anxious to guard against disappointment. Every great movement quickens the national intellect, and brings prominently forward those who would, otherwise, have remained in obscurity. Many among the working men, distinguished as leaders in the factory agitation, were of the rarest moral worth. The teachings of those more elevated in the social scale, who were also principals in that movement, from Gould to Oastler, directly tended to develope the devotional and moral properties of their humbler, but not less honourable coadjutors. The salutary results of this training were very apparent, in the modes adopted by the operatives to express their gratitude and joy. Many festivals were held in honour of the auspicious event. The most important of these was in the Free-

trade Hall, Manchester, on June the 7th, 1848; it was a most imposing gathering. The addresses then delivered were of a truly ennobling kind. Lord Ashley condensed and expressed the feelings and desires of all when he said :—"I especially rejoice that we are here to testify, in the words of this important resolution, our thanks to Almighty God, who has blessed us with so happy an issue to all our efforts." "This great victory is, of all the victories I have ever known or heard of, the finest proof of moral triumph that has ever been exhibited to the admiration of a free people." "This we can promise, we who are in parliament, and we who are out of it, that if you will only be vigorous in the assertion of your own rights, we never will be wanting at any moment, in any circumstances, at any expense of time, trouble, aye, and of money too—we will, by the blessing of God, be ever ready at your call; and sure am I of victory! And should it be necessary (to use a common phrase), 'we are all ready to die in the last ditch.'"

In commemoration of the event medals were struck. The Queen was pleased to mark her approbation by receiving from the factory operatives, at the hands of Lord Ashley, a gold medal.

Much labour and anxiety had brought on Mr Oastler a severe and dangerous illness. "The King of the factory children" was stretched on a bed of sickness, when his "subjects" were jubilant in the excess of joy. His absence only served to render his name the more impressive; all acknowledged his services, all were anxious for his recovery.

The movement which had rendered principle triumphant, which had been successful against opposition, and many attempts at compromise, invariably rejected; which had been the ally of humanity, and maintained directly on behalf of the oppressed, was worthy of being thus signally solemnized. A struggle of many years' duration, of unexampled

perseverance, and aimed at the noblest of ends, had been brought to a successful issue. A national reproach had been blotted out; it could not any longer with truth be said, that the law allowed the flagrant sacrifice of the lives and health of factory operatives, in open defiance of physiological science, and the proved experience of thousands of sufferers. An important and indispensable preliminary step had been taken towards the physical and moral improvement of those whose lives, from infancy to death, are devoted to the maintenance of important branches of national industry. The spirit of mercy, by the authority of parliament, had been made consonant with national interests, and the lives and limbs of human beings, unable to protect themselves, shielded from unnatural and excessive risk and suffering by a judicious application of the beneficent principles of the constitutional law of these realms—a result alike worthy of the approval of the Queen and her subjects.

Mr Wm. Walker resolved to have a public rejoicing, and treated the whole of the workpeople of the firm of Walkers and Co., numbering at least 3,000, to a feast in the grounds of Bolling Hall; the men lunched in hospitable Yorkshire fashion, the children and women were amply supplied with tea and cakes—all enjoyed a substantial repast. The scene was one to make the heart glad, and none were more gratified than Mr Walker and his family, whose sympathies had been long keenly alive to the necessity of an improvement in the condition of the factory operatives. After the entertainment, several of Mr Walker's friends, among whom was Mr Ferrand, addressed the people. Suitable addresses were delivered by tried and known friends of factory regulation, and the proceedings were conducted throughout with much spirit and harmony. The following address was presented to Messrs Walkers and Co., "by their workpeople:"—

"Gentlemen—We, the workpeople in your employ, avail

ourselves of this opportunity of expressing the deep debt of gratitude we owe to you for the distinguished part you have taken, and the unwearied interest you have evinced, by your long-continued efforts in behalf of that measure, the accomplishment of which we are this day celebrating—'The passing of the Ten Hours' Bill.'

"For a great number of years we and our children have been enjoying many of the advantages which must necessarily flow from the universal adoption of a reduction in the hours of labour in factories. Sixteen years have elapsed since you first joined us in the glorious cause, during the whole of which time we have been practically receiving some of the fruits which must arise from the Ten Hours' Factory Bill, you having, from that period to the present day, been working shorter hours than other manufacturers in the same branch of trade, and for which we now beg to offer you our most grateful acknowledgments.

"The improvement which we have witnessed in the minds and morals of our children and the younger branches of our fellow workers, is of such infinite magnitude that for their sakes and for the sake of society at large, we are, if possible, more highly grateful.

"We are sure, that you will not consider it any depreciation of our sense of our obligation to you as a firm, if we make special mention of Mr Wood, and, separately, thank him for the princely munificence with which he has supported the Ten Hours' Bill. When that measure was first pressed upon the attention of parliament, and when it was uncommon for men of wealth and influence to stand up in defence of the factory children, he was found in the front ranks of their advocates, and was, we believe, the first manufacturer in Yorkshire who came forward boldly in their cause. It is, therefore, because he was thus early in the field that we deem it right specially to express our most grateful thanks to him for the benefits which he then conferred upon us.

"Whilst we have been receiving the fruits of your generosity, we trust that our conduct as servants has, in some measure, merited your esteem and confidence, which it shall ever be our most anxious wish to deserve.

"And now, that the object of our most anxious wishes and solicitude is obtained, by the passing of the Ten Hours' Bill, we beg to offer you our most grateful congratulations, and, also our thanks to all the champions of this sacred cause, whether in or out of parliament, who have, with such indomitable zeal and perseverance, pursued this object to its final accomplishment, an object so desirable, and one which will be so beneficial to us and all the operative manufacturing classes.

"With every wish for your health and prosperity, and that the same unity of sentiment and good feeling may ever exist between us, we beg to subscribe ourselves, on behalf of the operatives in the various departments we represent,

"Your faithful and obliged servants,

"Matthew Balme, schoolmaster.
"Thomas Walmsley, for the overlookers.
"Joshua Longfield, for the mechanics.
"Henry Lupton, for the woolcombers.
"Joseph Best, for the woolsorters."

Mr John Rawson, of Bradford, was, for many years, chairman of the Short-time Committee, and took a conspicuous part in all the proceedings connected with the factory movement. Mr Rawson was originally a factory operative, and was then active in efforts to promote factory legislation. On becoming a master, his zeal did not in the least relax; he and Mr Matthew Balme, the energetic secretary of the Bradford Short-time Committee, rendered valuable services to the cause in which they were engaged.

It was thus that master and servant acted in "unity," as became those mutually dependent on each other.

On the following day Mr Walker received fifty guests at dinner, which included many of the supporters of the Ten Hours' Bill.

Thus ended one of the most extraordinary social movements on record, uniting within itself much of the energetic and philanthropic mind of the country, directed towards the accomplishment of a most important object. The labours of its advocates were not only crowned with success; to them belongs the honour of having pointed out to statesmen and philanthropists the importance of the consideration of the physical health, the moral welfare, and the education of the working classes. The factory movement was the precursor of the regulation in coal mines, sanatory, educational, and early-closing movements of later years. The enquiries and discussions, consequent on the investigation of the unregulated factory system, instructed and improved the understandings of vast numbers of men and women of all classes, and awakened them to a sense of the duties they owed to others as well as to themselves. Many who, in 1830, were startled at the novelty and the extreme nature of a remedial measure, regulating the hours of labour in all factories to ten per day, sanctioned by the legislature, were, in 1847, astonished, that opposition should have been offered, to a proposition so reasonable and humane. It is thus that public opinion undergoes, imperceptibly, changes of a most decided character, and, in its advancement, is apt to forget the point from which it has been moved by the intelligence and energy of the few. Factory regulation is, in the social economy of this country, an important fact, and the experience acquired thereby, serves the useful purpose of showing, which is the safe course to be followed by those who desire the permanent improvement of overworked and helpless children, women, and men.

Among the clergy, conspicuous for their services in the factory movement, must be prominently ranked the Rev.

James Bardsley, of Manchester, formerly of Burnley ; Rev. D. Jenkins (late) of Pudsey ; Rev. Wm. Heald, vicar of Birstal; Rev. James Cooper, Rev. J. Manning, of Huddersfield; Rev. J. Bateman, vicar of Huddersfield ; Rev. Joseph Loxdale Frost, of Bowling, near Bradford, Yorkshire ; Rev. George Smith, of Birkinshaw.

The Rev. Dr Aldis, a Baptist minister, formerly of Manchester, and now of London, was anxious in his efforts to make the Christian religion the practical rule of trade; consistently with this view of his duty, as a follower of Christ, the doctor was zealous in support of the Ten Hours' Bill. One effect was, that he gave offence to some among the principal members of his congregation ; he continued faithful to duty, without regard to personal consequences. Were he now to visit Manchester, he would find that good has followed from the measure he supported, and it is very probable, that some among those who thought him mistaken would acknowledge their former error. To Dr Aldis, and such as he, the factory operatives owe much; their condition has been improved, through the assistance of such benefactors.

The Rev. Philip Garrett, Wesleyan minister, was very energetic in his efforts to impress on the minds of all the necessity for factory regulation.

A well-known name, among the Wesleyan Methodists, was William Dawson ; popularly and endearingly spoken of as "Billy Dawson." This gifted lay-preacher was a great favourite wherever known. Among the Wesleyan Methodists in Yorkshire and Lancashire "Billy" was "a power in the State;" the homely force and real eloquence of his preaching are, among Wesleyans and others, a frequent theme of conversation. From a close connection with the labouring portions of the population in the factory districts, he was well able to judge of the effects of the factory system, physically, morally, and mentally.

William Dawson joined Mr Sadler and Mr Oastler early, in their efforts for factory improvement. When the grave closed over this Christian and devoted man, tens of thousands mourned over his departure from earth; and the helpless factory children lost a kind, faithful, and powerful advocate of their cause. William Dawson frequently corresponded with Mr Sadler on the factory question; the published letters of the former breathe a spirit of devotion and earnestness which awakened in the breasts of many a desire to be useful; and induced them to become supporters of factory regulation. William Dawson was learned only in the Scriptures, and the vigorous writings of John Wesley; but these he applied with point and force, to every public question which commanded his attention. His denunciations of covetousness and fraud, wherever known, and without respect to persons, were proofs of the manliness and sincerity of his character. "Godliness," in William Dawson's sense of the word, was an eminently practical power; spiritual in its origin, but temporal, as well as spiritual, in its application; and especially to be tested by the fulfilment of the daily duties of life; a standard by which he measured the professions of factory owners, sometimes, to their annoyance, and, frequently, to their improvement. William Dawson was a sincere promoter of, and a powerful auxiliary to, the factory movement.

"Father Hearne," a Roman Catholic priest, who officiated in Manchester during the earlier efforts of Sadler and Oastler, was, in many respects, a remarkable man. The holding up of his hand had more weight in a street disturbance or riot, on the Irish present, than the authority of the magistrates backed by the police. The "Father," from his priestly office, exercised much influence; this was vastly increased by the natural force of his character and high moral principle. Often did

"Father Hearne" declare "that the misery of Ireland was physical and moral health, compared to what he had witnessed under the unregulated factory system in England;" and that he was "heart and soul" on the side of "Ten Hours a day, and no surrender." He was a *father* to all who sought his counsel and aid; his name is seldom pronounced by a Roman Catholic in Manchester, but with devotional reverence, and rarely by a Protestant, but with respect. "Father Hearne" was a leader on the side of factory regulation, and considered no efforts too great in that cause; this good man suffered considerable persecution, because of his support of Oastler and Sadler, without complaint; and continued, in defiance of remonstrance, often urged, to wish success to their efforts.

John Brooke, Esq., of the firm of John Brooke and Sons, Armitage Bridge, near Huddersfield; John Whitacre, Esq., of Woodhouse, near Huddersfield; Thomas Cook, Esq., of the firm of Hagues, Cook, and Wormald, of Dewsbury; the late John Halliley, Esq., of Dewsbury; John Rand and Sons, of Bradford, Yorkshire; and J. R. Kay, Esq., Bury, Lancashire, gave to the efforts of the more active promoters of the factory movement their approval. These names represent much respectability and wealth, and the sanction of their authority had weight on the minds of many others.

Among the working men who distinguished themselves by their persevering and anxious labours, were Samuel Glendenning, Joseph Hawkyard, Thomas Hutton, John O'Rourke, Henry Barker, Benjamin Copley, Thomas Walmsley, Joseph Firth, Isaac Bottomly, Wm. Gibson, Charles Howard, Samuel Walker, John Spencer, Abraham Wildman, William Rouse, Benjamin Wood, James Thornton, George Adams, James Gallimore, David Howgate, John Abbey, James Glendenning, James Hustler, James Mills, John Mills, Ralph Taylor, Robert Pounder.

Joseph Firth, in early life, suffered from the cruelties of

the unregulated factory system; his simple, methodical statements, before the Sadler committee, in 1832, and at many public meetings, were influential in producing the change he so earnestly desired. For many years he has been out of the factory, and is well known, in Keighley and neighbourhood, as a public-spirited and useful citizen. He now resides in a small cottage, his own property, situated on a Yorkshire moor edge; the scene and circumstances constitute a striking contrast with life in a factory, as formerly known to him.

James Mills, of Oldham, died about three years since, and was followed to his grave by a procession of those who honoured him when living.

The late Earl of Ellesmere, who, in the House of Commons, as Lord Francis Egerton, represented a manufacturing district, was widely known as a Christian nobleman of enlarged benevolence and benignant manners. His lordship's acute and unbiassed mind, readily apprehended the importance of factory regulation. The door of his princely mansion in London was, at all times, open to the factory delegates; his ear was ever ready to listen to their statements, and, for the benefit of their clients, his counsel was cheerfully given. When opposed by theoretical reasoners, or by those who designated themselves "practical men," he listened attentively, but usually answered, "What is best for the weak, will, in time, be proved to be also best for the strong." This justly lamented nobleman exercised great social influence in the cotton factory districts; in his own character were embodied, to a considerable extent, literature, art, philosophy, industrial, social, and moral progress; he was eminently the representative of the virtues and graces of the English nobility, and was withal, "great in his humility." The services which his lordship rendered to the factory movement were many and important; in his capacity of statesman, he advocated the Ten Hours' Bill, and his name gave

influence to the cause he espoused. The working men of England have never had for their "friend," one of a kindlier heart. The late Earl of Ellesmere understood and reduced to practice the wisdom and philosophy of Shakespeare, as expressed in the words;

> "To thine ownself be true;
> And it must follow as the night the day,
> Thou can'st not then be false to any man."

Hence it was, that he became the constant supporter of the claims of the workers in factories to legislative protection.

It was said, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan in 1810, when an influential member of the House of Commons deprecated the publication of parliamentary debates: "Give me but the liberty of the press, and I will give to the minister a venal House of Peers—I will give him a corrupt and servile House of Commons—I will give him the full swing of the patronage of office—I will give him the whole host of ministerial influence—I will give him all the power that place can confer upon him, to purchase up submission, and overawe resistance; and yet, armed with the liberty of the press, I will go forth to meet him undismayed; I will attack, with that mightier engine, the mighty fabric he has raised. I will shake down from its height corruption, and bury it beneath the ruin of the abuses it was meant to shelter."

This noble declaration, worthy the Augustan age of parliamentary eloquence, was prophetic in spirit. It was a glance by the soul of genius, beyond the historical letter of its time, but true of the future, and never more conspicuously verified than in the history of the factory movement. It was by the agency of the press, that the insolence of wealth had been subdued, and the lust of avarice made ashamed. Every debate in parliament was a tolling of the knell of factory despotism, and a precursor of its fall; nobly as the newspaper press had done its duty, it was not alone; —the *Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Fraser's*

Magazine, distinguished themselves by an unreserved condemnation of factory cruelties, and a defence of the necessity for regulation by law; the able writing in the pages of these representative and directory organs of public opinion, was of inestimable value. The independent thinkers of the age were represented by Walter Landor, Robert Southey, and William Wordsworth, three stars in the literary hemisphere, which have shed more pure light below, than any other three we can name. Landor's *Imaginary Conversation between Romilly and Wilberforce*, is a complete digest of arguments in support of factory regulation. The striking delineation of, and reasoning upon, the evils of unregulated manufacturing industry, in the eighth and ninth books of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, will retain its place in our literature. Southey's more diffuse expositions on the same subject have out-lived much adverse criticism. There are others who have done good service.

James Montgomery, of Sheffield, a poet whose verses have been sung by many factory children, was anxious for the passing of a Ten Hours' Bill; he was an early and a faithful supporter of the cause. Montgomery had a sympathy for the oppressed and helpless, wherever known; and, while anxious for the emancipation of the "blacks," did not forget, for a moment, the claims of the "whites.' No poet, in the capacity of a citizen, ever more thoroughly reduced to practice the sentiments of humanity, as breathed forth by the inspiration of genius; his pity for the sufferings of the factory children was in keeping with the character of the man, and the spirit of the poet.

Mrs Trollope's novel, *Michael Armstrong*, has been much abused; it has, however, been useful, and so, also, has been *Helen Fleetwood*, by Charlotte Elizabeth.

The press has been powerful for good in the progress of the factory movement, and none can acknowledge its services

more heartily than have the factory operatives. Seldom has any question enlisted so much talent, united to humanity, and strengthened by a consciousness of right; its supporters in literature and in law, have applied their influence to a desirable end, and, before their powers, ministers have yielded, and mammon has been cast prostrate. The circumstances of the country have contributed to increase the extent of the advantages of factory regulation; this result has been inseparable from the growth of British manufacture, and was forecast by those most zealous for the passing of the Ten Hours' Bill, and frequently urged by talented writers in the periodical press—"the fourth estate" was a principal propelling power in moving the other three; to it, in consequence, much honour is due. "Give me," said Mr Oastler, at the commencement of his labours, "Give me but this fact, that infants of seven years of age, in the mills of Bradford, positively work thirteen hours per day, with an intermission of half-an-hour for dinner, and you furnish me with a *fulcrum*, on which I will place the lever of truth, and, by the force of public opinion, obtain the Ten Hours' Bill."

Many among the former opponents of factory regulation have avowed their approval of the Act in operation; its supporters have good reasons for contentment with their labours. How that feeling is enjoyed, the following extract from a letter by Lord Feversham, to his friend, Mr Oastler, will exemplify:—"Time has confirmed most cordially and satisfactorily the views we entertained as to the beneficial effects of the measure, as it has completely set at naught the predictions of our opponents, who cannot now deny the improvement evinced in the condition of the operatives since the passing of the Act: to the humble, but sincere, and zealous part I had in the meetings, discussions, and parliamentary debates, I look back with a satisfaction unsurpassed on any other occasions or

subjects whatever—the victory we at length achieved, was one of the greatest triumphs of the nineteenth century.—January 12th, 1857."

Lasting attachment is one of the rarest boons of life. Lord Feversham is known, as a nobleman of delicate sensibility, and of high honour. His unceasing friendship for Mr Oastler is creditable to his lordship: it has been, to the former, a source of confidence and consolation through many varied and trying troubles. His lordship's sympathy with his venerable coadjutor, has not been of the evanescent and easy kind, frequently awarded to public men, it has been solid and substantial, and is referred to in the most kindly way, by his lordship, in the following letter:—

"25 Belgrave square, May 23rd, 1857.

"Dear Sir,—I duly received your letter of the 20th, and am sincerely obliged. You are, it is superfluous to say, extremely welcome to any benefit you have received from me, and I truly hope your health will improve as the summer advances.

"We were, for years, fellow-labourers in a righteous cause, which it pleased God to prosper, and most important are the results, as regards the condition of those for whom we, or rather you, worked. Twenty-five years have elapsed since the County Meeting, at York. You headed the people from the West—I represented those in the North—from such a meeting we can date the victory we at length achieved, a hard-fought, but peaceful contest, because we were resolved not to violate the law or the constitution.

"Of all the measures I supported, whilst a representative of Yorkshire, I look upon the Ten Hours' Bill as the best, and most fraught with beneficial effects—it was a measure of justice, philanthropy, patriotism, and policy.

You see, I consider you, and write to you, as an old—one of my oldest friends!

"Had I been at home the day you called, it would have gratified me to have seen you.

"Ever yours truly,

"FEVERSHAM.

"To Mr Oastler, Guildford, Surrey."

His lordship's expressions of satisfaction are reciprocated by all those of influence from their social position, who were the active promoters of the measure. Mr Fielden did not long survive the final success of his great parliamentary effort. His sons and relatives, "the Fieldens of Todmorden," who shared with him the labour and trouble attendant on his great exertions, have worthily and honourably guarded the boon won at so much cost, labour, and talent, and, through the hands of the late Mr John Fielden, of Todmorden, at length conferred upon the factory operatives.

The part sustained throughout the factory movement by Mr Oastler, the preceding pages have unfolded. His labours have not brought to him the honours which most men covet; but, they have earned for him the affections of many whose love cannot fail to impart enjoyment. "The noblest of all martyrdoms is that of an old age impoverished by the generous sacrifices of youth; and dependent on the gratitude or ingratitude of a world for whose good it has relinquished its all."—(The *Times*, March 16th, 1847.)

It was the working men of Huddersfield, who first united with Mr Oastler in active efforts, to instruct and direct public opinion, on the factory question. It was their conjoint agreement, to lay aside party politics, and apply their united energies in one common cause and for one common end, that constituted the "purchase power," which, in its application, led to such desirable social results. In all the vicissitudes of life,—and, during more than a quar-

ter of a century, they have been many,—the friendship between Mr Oastler and the Huddersfield factory operatives has remained undisturbed. He now enjoys the tranquillity of an old age,—impoverished, in a worldly sense, it is true, by the generous sacrifice of manhood; but, hallowed and enriched, by a consciousness of much good having been done in earlier years, and gladdened by the contemplation of the benefits conferred on others. The reader who has accompanied us thus far, will not fail to appreciate the sincerity of the sympathy existing between Mr Oastler and his old friends, as unfolded in the following correspondence; a sympathy, rendered the more touching and creditable by the minute details and humble circumstances it reveals, and which, better than any words at our command, will convey to the reader the appreciation, on behalf of the operative classes, of a sense of benefits enjoyed. This correspondence is copied from the *Huddersfield Chronicle* of August 19, 1856, and is alike creditable to both the parties concerned.

"To Richard Oastler, King of the Factory Children.

"Dear Old Friend,—You are not forgotten. The factory operatives of Huddersfield never cease to remember you, their friend—the "King of the Factory Children." We know that your labours on our behalf, though profitable to us, have, in a money sense, made you poor; and knowing that, we feel persuaded you will not reject the accompanying present of a suit of cloths, top coat, and hat—all of the very best manufacture and workmanship, paid for by hundreds who have little to spare, but who thus wish to express their gratitude and hearty good-will. It is a small instalment of the great debt they and their children owe to you, for your long and devoted services in the great war against oppression and wrong, fought under the banners of the 'Ten Hours' Bill,' and for the restoration of the '43rd of Elizabeth.' The sacrifices you so nobly made, regardless of reproach, calumny,

and persecution—while battling for the weak against the strong, for truth against error—for principle against expediency—although they have deprived you of many worldly comforts, we doubt not in their results, and in their now pleasing remembrance, fail not to yield you more real comfort, more solid satisfaction, than money can buy. We know you feel, that you have not lived in vain. Of that fact we are the evidences. We rejoice to tell you, because we know it will gladden your heart—one of the results of the factory legislation in this part of Yorkshire, is, as you always said it would be, the best of good feeling generally between masters and workmen—the few exceptions being among those who, in spite of God and man, are resolved to have their own way. We heartily wish for the continuance and increase of that good understanding. We are happy also to inform you, that many who formerly opposed, now cordially approve the 'Bill.' One pleasing incident connected with our present to you is, we intended to purchase the top coat cloth from John Brooke and Sons, of Armitage Bridge; and when our secretary, John Leech, called upon Mr Brooke, and informed him what was on foot, Mr Brooke said, 'We do not cut ends;' but, turning round, he further said, 'What length do you require?' and on being told, went into the warehouse and brought the required length of a super-Oxford broad, observing, 'There now, tell the "old king," that is a present from John Brooke and Sons, of Armitage Bridge, who wish him health to wear it.' When Mr Brooke was told that the operatives had subscribed the money to pay for it, he said, 'I am glad to hear you have not forgotten your old friend, if you have any money to spare, send it to him, I dare say he will find good use for it.' We know that the above little incident will not be taken amiss.

"We most cordially beg your acceptance of our small token of respect, with wishes for your health and strength to wear it, knowing you will not like it the worse, because

it is given to you by the factory workers. To ensure a 'good fit,' we have had the suit made by your old tailor, Mr John Scott. When you write to us, we shall be glad to hear how you get on in your old age; and we assure you, your opinion and advice, on any subject, will be read with delight.

"Yours faithfully, (for the committee of operatives,)

"JOHN LEECH, Sec.

"P.S.—In one of the waistcoat pockets you will find two sovereigns which we had collected, but which, in consequence of the kindness of John Brooke and Sons, was not wanted.

"Huddersfield, July 20th, 1856."

Mr Oastler replied to his Huddersfield correspondents in a letter, bearing address and date; "South Hill Cottage, Guildford, Surrey, February 26th, 1856," reviewing their united exertions in the past, and expressing his opinions on some current questions of interest; the concluding portions we quote, because they refer to the present position and habits of their author:—

"See, my friends, what a long letter I have written to you. Did not I tell you that your kindness had caused my heartstrings to vibrate? You cannot wonder that, after a silence so long, being aroused by your striking token of affectionate remembrance, I who, for many years, in the strength of my manhood, watched and toiled with you, should, when thus refreshed by your love in my retired old age, in this, may be, my last letter to you, talk to you of things new and old. Your love will blot out all that is worthless; it will cause you to treasure up what may be note-worthy. Here, I might conclude, had you not kindly said, 'We shall be glad to hear how you get on in your old age?'

"Fancy an old man, satisfied with the share he has taken in the turmoil of life, with pleasing recollections of the past, and hopeful expectations for the future; in the enjoy-

ment of moderate health, always in good spirits, his mind being as elastic as in youth, retired to a neat, clean, comfortable cottage, standing in a very pretty walled-in garden, half way up a hill as high as Fixby, overlooking an old castle in ruins, and a fine old agricultural county town, from which his cottage is separated by gardens and a bowling-green ; the square lines of buildings being beautifully broken by ivy and the rich foliage of forest and fruit trees. That town is never darkened by a cloud of smoke. The old man often sits in his rustic chair, at his cottage door, gazing on the fine old ruin, and the lovely view of fields and lanes, and woods, and heaths, and farm-houses and cottages, spreading far beyond the town. The passing of the railway trains reminds him of the busy trafficking of the world; but he prefers the rural sounds and scenes by which his prospect is enlivened. He is thankful that the music of his charming songsters is near, and that the whirl and whistle of the trains are at a distance. He spends much of his time in his garden, delighting to watch the progress of nature, and having a double relish for the flowers, fruit, and vegetables 'grown in his own garden.'

"The old man's household is small, but as happy as the day is long. A loved, a long-tried friend, in sickness, his ever-watchful nurse ; in health, the lively companion of his hearth and rambles; that faithful friend and a good servant, who knows and loves and does her duty, form his 'establishment.' A little sweet-tempered black and white spaniel (Phillis) adds to the pleasures of the three.

"The old man, in winter as in summer, rises early—delighted with rambling in the fields, and lanes, and woods, but chiefly rejoicing in his 'before-breakfast ramble,' the air being then, as he says, 'most refreshing, most invigorating, and the early song of the lark welcoming the great orb of day, being more soul-stirring than his after notes.' The sweet melodies of the cheerful songsters of the woods, fields,

and gardens, are, in his ear, the sweetest concerts. Nor does he fail to relish the rural music that most charms the shepherd's boy. The tinkling of the sheep's bells, the bleating of the lambs and sheep, the lowing of cattle, the neighing of horses, with many other rural sounds of cheerfulness, serve to banish gloom and foster joy.

"Though not an enemy to any real improvement in agriculture, the old man is not 'disgusted' when he sees a yoke of oxen ploughing or conveying manure to the field There may not be any 'profit' in the sweet peals of bells overhanging the fine teams of horses, when leading corn to market; but those bells impart cheerfulness to labour, both to man and horses. On the morning of the market-day, many such teams congregate in the High street, forming groups of men and horses, cheerfully and usefully employed, in storing the market-house with the richest produce of the fields, 'the staff of life.' There, many a time, he strays to feast his eyes and ears. 'Were I a farmer,' says he, 'I would aim at having the sweetest peal of bells; for it is becoming, that nature's bounty should be marketed with sounds of joy.' There is, however, one rural sight, above all others, which yields him pure delight—the old shepherd, with his crook in hand, leading (not driving) his flock. Delighted, the old man sits upon the grassy bank to see them pass. When any loiter or stray, the well-known voice allures them; they follow obedient to its call, but 'they know not the voice of strangers.' Then, the old man thinks of 'the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who, when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice,' and who has graciously thus revealed himself to man—'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of Mine.' Oftentimes, the old man wanders among such sounds and scenes, accompanied only by his faithful Phillis, whose gambols always add to his delight. Frequently, his joy

is increased when his beloved Maria is his companion, and when 'young students' honour him with their society. His cup of joy is full, when the group of ramblers is swelled by 'old friends from the north,' to whom he loves to exhibit his rich rural treasures, and point out the beauty-spots in the scenery, with a zest increased by repetition. He never seeks for new acquaintances; he cherishes old friendships, having a host of tried and faithful friends, who, with himself, bore the burden and heat of the day of struggle. Many such, and, not unfrequently, their children who have learned to love him, honour and refresh him by their visits. It is not easy to measure his delight on such greetings. He knows not that he has one enemy. His correspondence is as varied as it is extensive. Young and old, rich and poor, noble and plebian, are among his correspondents. He has many books, but the Holy Bible may now be said to constitute his library. On his intercourse with God, I may not dwell. He is full of faith and hope. In every day's blessing, realizing the truthfulness of Almighty God; and, sometimes, obtaining a glimpse of that glorious purchased inheritance, into which many of his friends and fellow-labourers have entered. Relying upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he waits his turn in patience. When he looks backward, at every step he traces the hand and the goodness of God; if forward, his reliance is still upon that hand.

"In the eye of the mere merchant trader, the old man may be counted poor, but having long since placed his 'capital' in the 'Bank' that never fails, he is rich. In faith he cast his bread upon the waters, and now, after many days, he finds it His God provides. The means of his sustenance come from the hands of generous clergymen, nobles, members of parliament, landowners, farmers, lawyers, bankers, merchants, factory masters, and (as your gift bears witness) the little fingers of grateful factory

children. Say, then, my kind old friends, is not that old man rich? He has discovered the true secret of happiness, and thus, from year to year, he lives in contentedness and peace; sometimes receiving from those who know him best the consoling assurance, 'You have not lived in vain; of that fact we are the evidences.'

"I say, my friends, fancy an old man like that, and you will be able to answer your question, as to 'How I get on in my old age.'

"Fare ye well. Receive this letter as it is written—in love. God bless you all.

"I remain,

"My old and faithful friends,

"Yours, in truth and love,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

In the commencement, and throughout the progress of this unparalleled movement, many were found working effectively in the struggle, whose names were not so prominent, as were the names of others, but who contributed most valuable assistance to the great result.

Among these, and foremost, was Mr Charles Walker, whose brother William, and himself, were in intimate business connection with Mr Wood.

The talent of Mr Charles Walker was much appreciated in the Ten Hours' Bill committees. His counsel in difficulties, his firm adherence to the right, where some were disposed to waver—his logical power to unravel the sophistries of cunning opponents, on many occasions of deep interest; his manly, intelligent, and effective advocacy of the cause upon the platform and in the press, were rightly appreciated.

Mixing much in business transactions with all ranks of manufacturers, Mr Charles Walker had many valuable opportunities of silencing, if not convincing those adverse

to his opinions, which he seldom failed to employ; and it would be unjust not to count him among the most valued friends of his great and successful effort.

Mr Lawrence Pitkethly, whose name has been frequently mentioned in the foregoing pages, has rendered services which it is not easy to acknowledge in fitting terms. He has been constant "in season, and out of season;" a man of remarkable physical and mental activity, of lively and enlarged benevolence. He has a reward for the many sacrifices he has made for the factory operatives in a consciousness of good done. Mr John Leech, of Huddersfield, was the constant coadjutor of Mr Pitkethly; Mr Leech's sterling honesty of purpose, untiring activity, and urgent earnestness, were oftentimes of great utility.

Few men have a kindlier, or a more generous disposition, than Mr David Weatherhead, of Keighley. As a tradesman and citizen, his reputation for honour and probity stands deservedly high. He, like Mr Pitkethly, and many others, is, in politics, a radical, but on the poor-law and factory questions, worked heartily with Sadler and Oastler. From 1829 to 1847, Mr Weatherhead supported, with much energy, the Ten Hours' Bill movement; and has witnessed, with satisfaction, the good effects which have followed the labours of himself and others. He has been often heard to say: "Whatever is really good for others, as a public measure, cannot be injurious to me; no man ought to allow his fear of results to prevent him from being faithful to what is in itself right." This may, or may not, be esteemed a wise maxim; it assuredly bears the stamp of a mind singularly free from prejudice and a contracted selfishness. At the great county meeting at York, at the Wibsey Low Moor meeting, and on many other occasions, Mr Weatherhead has rendered efficient service. In the township of Keighley, and

neighbourhood, he has, at all times, advocated what he believed would, in practice, be most beneficial to working men, conspicuously so—the Ten Hours' Bill.

Robert Owen has been spared, by the hand of time, to a venerable old age. Mr Hindley is still in active public life; Mr Bull is rector of St Matthew's, Birmingham; Mr Stephens resides in Staleybridge; Mr Brotherton has paid the debt of nature; but few of the active spirits of the Ten Hours' Bill movement remain. "Lord Ashley" is now the Earl of Shaftesbury. Robert Blincoe, whose sufferings, in early life, must have, in the breast of every reader, awakened feelings of pity mingled with shame, is, in Manchester, a comparatively prosperous man. The good effects flowing from the labours of the dead and living advocates of factory regulation, are becoming every day more and more manifest, in the improved physical, educational, and moral condition of those engaged in factory labour. The factory districts are still capable and much in need of amendment, but no one who knew them, even ten years back, and has eyes to see, can doubt the improvement which has taken place. It is very satisfactory to be able to record, that not a few factory owners, formerly the opponents of all regulation, are now firm friends and willing witnesses of its good results. A few there are who still remain in stern opposition.

The increase of demand for cotton, beyond the existing means of supply, and which, at this time, is a subject of great and growing public interest, has caused some of those interested in manufacture, to think of the propriety of a further reduction in the hours of labour, and many to acknowledge, with renewed earnestness, the salutary influence of the Ten Hours' Act. The increase of machinery having surpassed the supply of cotton and raised the price of the raw material, to an extent incompatible with reasonable profits in manufacture, is a striking fulfilment of what John

Fielden, and others among the Ten Hours' Bill advocates, thought probable, and which, among other reasons, induced them to advocate regulation and restriction by law. It is very well known, and generally acknowledged, that with the present supply of cotton and the existing consuming power of machinery in manufacture, the working hours in factories are quite long enough to be profitable to manufacturers; in fact, not a few mills are working shorter hours than fixed by the Factories' Act, for the reasons stated.

The events of the time, as regards the supply of cotton and its manufacture, prove, very decidedly, the advantages arising from the Ten Hours' Act; in the absence of such a law, cotton would have been higher in price, and the embarrassment of manufacturers from that cause, consequently, greater; this view of the case is now very well understood by many Lancashire cotton manufacturers, some among these were formerly opponents of all factory laws; with a frankness that does them credit, they acknowledge their former mistake. Not any provincial town has a newspaper press conducted with greater talent than that existing in the city of Manchester; its columns have recently contained correspondence of high value on the supply, demand, and price of cotton; from such correspondence, from personal inquiries, and other sources of information, it is pleasing to be enabled to record that the economical bearings of the short-time question gain in the estimation of public opinion by experience and discussion.

The whole tone and character of the factory system has, of late years, been elevated. Factory regulation, with other agencies, has operated to produce this desirable change; it has been the principal. There is now a much higher sense of the responsibilities of their position maintained among the millowners as a body, than was formerly common. Cruelties, such as those detailed in previous pages, could not now occur; all parties concerned would be ashamed of their existence;

a wholesome fear of public censure would, alone, be sufficient to deter many from the commission of gross outrages on humanity and decency. Some, among the owners of factories, where shameful cruelties were frequent, under the unregulated system, were guilty of a neglect of duty, rather than of positive cruelty ; they ignorantly allowed overlookers and others to abuse the trust reposed in them. In the evidence given before parliamentary committees, and in speeches made at public meetings, the names of the principals of firms were necessarily conspicuous. It sometimes happened that facts thus made known, awakened enquiry, which was followed by amendment. It is fortunate, most fortunate, that after trial, trouble, and tribulation to many, the whole system has undergone a decided improvement.

For the sake of example, such an incident as that so feelingly described in the evidence of Gillet Sharpe, of Keighley, before the Sadler committee of 1832, could not, from existing facts, be readily conceived. The circumstance formed the foundation of the following pathetic lines by Mr Sadler ; they contributed very influentially to bring about "a better time" for factory children :—

THE FACTORY CHILD'S LAST DAY.

"'Twas on a winter's morning,
The weather wet and wild,
Three hours before the dawning
The father roused his child ;
Her daily morsel bringing,
The darksome room he paced,
And cried, 'The bell is ringing,
My hapless darling, haste !'

"Father, I'm up, but weary,
I scarce can reach the door,
And long the way, and dreary—
O carry me once more !

To help us we've no mother,
And you have no employ:
They kill'd my little brother—
Like him I'll work and die!

"Her wasted form seem'd nothing,
The load was at his heart:
The sufferer he kept soothing,
Till at the mill they part.
The overlooker met her,
As to her 'frame' she crept,
And with his thong he beat her,
And cursed her as she wept.

"Alas! what hours of horror
Made up her latest day;
In toil, and pain, and sorrow,
They slowly passed away:
It seemed as she grew weaker,
The threads the oft'ner broke,
The rapid wheels ran quicker,
And heavier fell the stroke.

"The sun had long descended,
But night brought no repose;
Her day began and ended
As cruel tyrants chose.
At length a little neighbour,
Her halfpenny she paid,
To take her last hour's labour;
While by her 'frame' she laid.

"At last the engine ceasing,
The captives homeward rush'd;
She thought her strength increasing—
'T was hope her spirits flush'd:
She left, but oft she tarried;
She fell and rose no more,
Till by her comrades carried,
She reached her father's door.

"All night, with tortured feelings,
He watched his speechless child;
While close, beside her kneeling,
She knew him not—nor smil'd.

Again the factory's ringing,
Her last perceptions tried;
When from her straw bed springing,
'Tis time!' she shrieked, and died!

"That night a chariot pass'd her,
While on the ground she lay,
The daughters of her master
An evening visit pay;
Their tender hearts were sighing,
As negro wrongs were told,
While the white slave was dying,
Who gained their father's gold!"

There is now, happily, no such "Factory Child's last day."

The home humanity of England is not, by any means, so great as her home wants require, to render the lot of the majority of her children desirable, but, as regards those employed in factory labour, there has been a marked and a necessary change. The light of experience and experiment cannot be wholly lost; the empiricism of many pretenders to superior knowledge, and who opposed factory regulation as "a mischievous delusion," has been demonstrated; the theory of universal non-interference, even when clothed in the garb of "perfect liberty," has lost much of its power over the minds of the working men; they feel that they are not "perfectly free agents." Let sophists write and orators declaim to the contrary as much as they may, the error of the past has not been in the principle of interference; it is the foundation of all government, The error has been, that the physical and moral existence of the major part of British society—the working classes—has, in too many instances, been made subservient to the mere acquisition of riches. In a country avowedly Christian, mammon has been raised above man in the eye of the legislature. The passing of the Ten Hours' Act, in 1847, has proved a decided check

to a dangerous delusion, and opened out the way for further improvements. What these ought to be, and how they may be accomplished, are questions demanding the attention of every thoughtful citizen. The business of those who assume to lead society in its course, is, to discover, what are the right objects towards which the combined action of public opinion should be directed. In the application of the necessary means for the realization of these objects, it is necessary to possess the most perfect possible knowledge of *all* the interests concerned, fully to weigh their equitable claims, and, on the balance of these, establish a practical rule of action. Man is both the instrument and subject of all human legislation, and is apt to fall into serious errors; when under the control of pure motives and an informed judgment, these will not be of frequent occurrence, and, when existing, will serve, like the sailor casting the lead, to indicate where, with safety, the vessel may be navigated.

And what were the characteristics of the ardent supporters of factory regulation? Consciousness of a just cause, and faith in its ultimate success. A small band of men united together, for a common purpose, pledged their word that they should succeed, and they, by force of conviction, dragged public and parliamentary opinion in their wake. No great object can be accomplished without confidence; it is, to the human mind, a lever of power. Does Chat Moss sink under the weight cast on its surface, and men stand aghast, and prophesy failure? What, under these circumstances, sustained the simple-minded George Stephenson? Confidence in the soundness of his own judgment. This is one of the latest, and most striking proofs of the power of faith, founded on knowledge. The result of such knowledge and confidence, as applied in the material world, and manifested in railway communication, is travelling at numbers of miles per hour, which, even men of scientific reputation declared to be irrecon-

cilable with human existence. Theory has been disproved by fact, and every bar of iron laid down for railway purposes, is a rebuke to the pretentious ignorance that prophesied "Impossible." History has many illustrations of the potent power of faith in the future; one of the most remarkable, was the confidence of Columbus in the existence of "a new world;" he, of all his companions, had faith, and "the new world" is now the rival of the old. Physical facts come home to the senses of men; they are visible to the eye. Results in the region of mind and morals, though less distinct, are not less real. As a physical fact, factory regulation may be seen; its real and effective power on mind and morals, can only be understood by a contemplation of what must have been, had the evils forenamed in these pages, not been checked. The propelling power to action, on the part of the principal leaders in the Ten Hours' Bill movement, was a union of knowledge and faith; many were called to rest with their fathers, before the object desired was realised; yet, the labours of such were not lost. History, offers her tribute of testimony to the truth, tersely expressed by a gifted poet:—"They never fail, who die in a great cause."

THE END.

RENNYLL and WEIGHT, Little Pulteney street, Haymarket.

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